



*China Perspectives*

# **A NEW EXPLORATION OF HEGEL'S DIALECTICS III**

**THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE**

Deng Xiaomang



# A New Exploration of Hegel's Dialectics III

This volume explores the unity of logic, epistemology and ontology in Hegel's dialectic and the interrelation among the three, thereby revealing the internal features of Hegel's dialectic as well as the connection and divergence between Hegel's and Marx's philosophical thought.

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**Deng Xiaomang**

This book is published with financial support from the Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

First published in English 2022

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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English Version by permission of The Commercial Press, Ltd.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Deng, Xiaomang, author. | Wu, Lihuan, translator. |

Meyers, Chad Austin, translator.

Title: A New Exploration of Hegel's Dialectics III: The Three-Dimensional Structure / Xiaomang Deng; [translated by Wu Lihuan and Chad Austin Meyers]

Other titles: Si bian de zhang li. English

Description: New York, New York: Routledge, 2022. |

Series: China perspectives | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021046264 (print) | LCCN 2021046265 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781032217383 (v. 1; hardback) | ISBN 9781032217444 (v. 1; paperback) |

ISBN 9781032217390 (v. 2; hardback) | ISBN 9781032217451 (v. 2; paperback) |

ISBN 9781032217406 (v. 3; hardback) | ISBN 9781032217468 (v. 3; paperback) |

ISBN 9781032217369 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032217376 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781003269809 (v. 1; ebook) | ISBN 9781003269816 (v. 2; ebook) |

ISBN 9781003269830 (v. 3; ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770–1831. | Dialectic.

Classification: LCC B2949.D5 D4613 2022 (print) |

LCC B2949.D5 (ebook) | DDC 193–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021046264>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021046265>

ISBN: 978-1-032-21740-6 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-21746-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-26983-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003269830

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Newgen Publishing UK

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## Preface

### The Hegelian dialectic as the unity of logic, epistemology and ontology

This book's examination of Hegel's dialectic has focused primarily on aspects that have been less studied in the domestic philosophical community of China. What we want to discuss now is a problem to which Hegel scholars both at home and abroad have come to pay much attention: namely, the "the unity of three" or "the unity of four" in Hegel's dialectic. Foreign scholars have already done extensive work on the relationship between the dialectic, logic and ontology in Hegel, but whether these three are ultimately unified in Hegel's thought still remains inconclusive. In China, this problem is explored from the premise of unifying each component within Hegel's dialectic. As to whether this a tripartite unity of the dialectic, the logic and the epistemology, or a fourfold unity with the addition of ontology, Hegel scholars formulate it differently. I think fourfold unity seems more comprehensive from the perspective of Hegel's logical system. The *Science of Logic* is divided into two main parts: "Objective Logic" (the "Doctrine of Existence" and the "Doctrine of Essence") and "Subjective Logic" (the "Doctrine of Concept"). The first part, according to Hegel, replaces the metaphysics or the ontology of the past.<sup>1</sup> The second part then unfolds ontology and epistemology from the *Logic* enveloping them. The ultimate mission is to secure the consistent agreement of the three. Over and above this division, the "dialectical method" indeed plays the commanding role of governing all parts along with their division, while making each part of the whole interpenetrate with and consistently string along all the others. We could also describe the dialectic as a method of processing the subject matter of thought, but a method that (is not alien to) but always remains intrinsically identical to the subject matter that it is processing; Hegel's dialectical method, however, is not just the method of thought, a logical method; for, if it were, it would then be equal or reducible to one of the factors that it commands, that is, the science of logic, and the unity of the four then also becomes the unity of the three, but on the other hand, the dialectical method is not a fourth factor standing apart from the other three (the *Logic*, epistemology, and ontology), but is instead the factor that the other three factors all have by themselves, the factor that holds them all together; it is the factor that integrates them. In other words, the dialectic is nothing more or less than the factor that does the uniting in the unity of the



three. From this point of view, the unity of the four is the tripartite unity of dialectical understanding.

In effect, when Hegel uses the term “dialectic” to encapsulate his method overall, he uses it in the highest, most original, ancient Greek sense of the term. Like *logos*, “dialectic” means conversation or linguistic communication in general. So, for Hegel, the dialectic like *logos* may become logic, substance and the progression of knowing. We have already analyzed how *logos* in ancient Greek transformed from language and discourse into objective law and substance, how it evolved into “logic.” The belief in the natural identity of the objective laws of things and the laws of thinking about things (logic) shows clearly in this same linguistic origin that they share. Therefore, the ancient Greek term *logos* is by itself the unity of logic, epistemology and ontology. This is evident in Aristotle, whose logic possesses by itself both ontological and epistemological significance.<sup>2</sup> Hegel’s approach is essentially the same as Aristotle’s, except that Hegel’s understanding of “logic” runs much deeper, insofar as he understands logic and *logos* as dialectic, as the self-moving process of unifying the three by containing self-negation and contradiction (*Widerspruch*, that is, a conflicting “saying”) within itself. Thus, Hegel restores to prominence the sense of *logos* that Heraclitus intended to express by it.

Logic, ontology and epistemology must all be dialectical for Hegel, and all of his propositions illustrate this dialectical relationship among the three. Therefore, we will not specifically explore further how the dialectic is one with logic, epistemology and ontology. We will focus instead on the following questions. How is Hegel’s dialectical logic consistent with epistemology? How is his dialectical epistemology consistent with ontology? How is dialectical ontology consistent with logic? Chinese academic circles often point out the very fact of the consistent identity (or unity) of the three, yet without analyzing in-depth the real questions as to how this so and why this is so. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the unique, dialectical nature of logic, epistemology and ontology in Hegel and how every one of the three by itself possesses the intrinsic nature of unifying the three. We may therefore still hope to discover some new things in such a popular theme by proceeding with the study of Hegel in this way.

## Notes

1 See *Science of Logic*, vol. 1, p. 43.

2 Ahmanov 1960, 100, 128.

## Part I

# Hegel's dialectical logic

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophy became epoch-making not only for expounding the dialectic's series of principles but also for the first time turning the dialectic into logic, into a system of rigorous integrity. Of course, there is a contradiction, perhaps even a fundamental one, between this system and his dialectical method. However, no one can deny that it was the form of this system that for the first time turned the dialectic into something with definite form, not just something negative but something active and positive by itself. Therefore, it is incomprehensible to speak of Hegel's dialectic and bypass his dialectical logic, which is indeed the purest form that it takes. Hans Friedrich Fulda is somewhat correct in this sense to argue that the Marxist school, though the closest historically to Hegel's dialectic, departed from it by ignoring or abandoning dialectical logic and hence found itself in an almost helpless situation when facing the critique of the dialectic from the standpoint of logic.<sup>1</sup> Even though not completely accurate, this viewpoint nevertheless correctly demonstrates that, relatively speaking, the historical features of Hegel's dialectic always draw more attention than the logical aspects of it do, which is reflective especially of dialectical logic "in the narrower sense," namely in the study of the first part of Hegel's "Doctrine of Concept," that is, "Subjectivity." The Chinese people have historically frowned upon "chewing on text and ruminating on words" (*yaowen juezi* 咬文爵字), or in other words, it is not the Chinese custom to focus much on grammar and linguistic norms. They get a headache when they see the words "S is P." Moreover, such abstract speculation is neither meaningful directly with respect to either politics or ethics, nor does it have any aesthetic value; it appears superfluous to boot. Chinese scholars, especially, on the contrary find it easier to accept contradictory doctrines, categories and historical theories that Westerners find harder to understand. This shows that the instinctual tendency of the Chinese way of thinking is toward the impalpable. Hegel's dialectic also possesses impalpable factors, which are precisely what traditional Western thinking finds difficult to grasp. However, the impalpable aspect of Hegel's thought is grounded in the palpable, and his dialectic is based on two millennia of formal logic that had been developing through the Western tradition prior to his inventive take on it. Therefore, if we simply rely on our partial strengths

## 2 *Hegel's dialectical logic*

without delving into the logical form of Hegel's dialectic, a comprehensive grasp of its true meaning will remain beyond our reach. On the other hand, although the logical form of Hegel's dialectic utilizes the judgments and deductions of formal logic, Hegel transforms them into direct expressions of dialectical content. Therefore, the entire position of dialectical logic is fundamentally different from that of formal logic. Many people, including those who want to defend dialectical logic, attempt to add formal rules to the determinacy of dialectical logic from the standpoint of formal logic. We see this in the works of foreign scholars like Yuri Petrov from the Soviet Union, Fulda, and domestic scholars from China, all of whom speak of "formalizing" dialectical logic, which places Hegel's dialectical logic in complete opposition to its historical content and marks an even greater departure from the spirit of the dialectic.

This part, therefore, first discusses the relationship between Hegel's dialectical logic and formal logic. It then goes into the historical or empirical foundation behind dialectical logic, and finally draws out the consistency of dialectical logic and epistemology on such grounds.

### **Note**

- 1 Fulda's "Scattered Notes on Dialectic" in (Horstmann 1978, 34).

# 1 Dialectical logic and formal logic

In the history of Western philosophy, the word “logic” comes from the ancient Greek word *logos*, which originally referred to the universal forms of language, grammar and, by extension, to laws and the essences of things. According to Aristotle’s usage, and later to Scholastic philosophy’s usage (i.e., Aquinas), what constitutes the essence of a thing is the “form.” The source of this conception is the doctrine of *logos*. The form of something, according to Aristotle, is the *logos* (definition) of something. Therefore, Aristotle’s logic does not imply some “abstract form” that is totally separable from content, and for Aristotle, the form, on the contrary, is the true content, the essence of the thing. We owe the separation of form from content to the great merit of the medieval nominalists, who wherewith fought against the usage of textual interpretation and logical analysis of the Bible to restrict and stifle living thought, while holding to the differentiation of language, words, concepts and their relationships from empirical facts. However, the nominalists by doing so only affirmed the same thing as their opponents, the realists, who merely saw this tedious formal analysis divorced from factual reality as nothing less than the whole truth itself. When modern empirical science and empiricist philosophers emerged from the nominalist tradition, they also inherited the viewpoint of nominalist logic, which is that logic is nothing more than the formal means and tools by which subjective content is externally applied to content (the object) by the subject. Modern rationalist philosophy then went on to insist on the basis of mathematics that a logical relation shall enjoy having as much objective necessity as a mathematical relation would, reflecting how the objective thing and “substance” is by itself constituted. In this way, a “panlogism” with fatalist characteristics became the unbearable shackles of mechanical necessity choking humanity once again. Logic, in a word, became the new dead form that would come to drive the living mad. Immanuel Kant’s “transcendental logic” tried to conquer these two oppositions of subjective and objective. In one respect, Kant opposes the simple view of taking logic as nothing but the arbitrary means of subjective applications, insisting that the categories of the understanding and their logical application have both objective universality and necessity, insofar as the categories are “constitutive” of the objects of scientific knowledge. In another respect,

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however, Kant also opposes the view of taking objective universality and necessity as extrinsic qualifications of human subjectivity. For Kant, the contrary is the case thanks to his “Copernican revolution” in the thought that, truthfully speaking, this objective necessity is brought about by the activity of human subjectivity. However, Kant fails to truly achieve the mission on two fronts. On the one hand, the object constituted by “transcendental logic” is not the truly objective “thing in-itself” but is only “phenomenon,” and hence, merely subjective still. On the other hand, he does not “deduce” the categories but merely “discovers” them within the preexisting logic and knowledge of human beings, ultimately along with the synthetic unity of the human being’s a priori (primordial) apperception. Thus, the system of categories remains a rigidly fixed, unchanging framework which although intrinsically belongs a priori to human being’s faculty of understanding also regulates the human being. Johann Gottlieb Fichte largely overcomes the second shortcoming in Kant, and began the experiment of deducing the categories, but Fichte then falls short of overcoming Kant’s first shortcoming insofar as his deduction never escapes the subjective sphere. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling replace logical deduction with intuitive knowledge, but they fail to go beyond Kant’s finite subjective viewpoint when it comes to logic as such.

Such are the resources of thought standing before Hegel as he put together his dialectical logic, which he calls speculative logic. In Hegel’s view, the most critical step in the reform of traditional formal logic is the critique of Kant’s transcendental logic, for the reason that all of the limitations of traditional formal logic are most thoroughly exposed in Kant here, and neither Kant nor his successors ever successfully broke free of them. Thus, Hegel reminds the reader in the *Science of Logic* that “[i]n this work I make frequent references to the Kantian philosophy,” since “it constitutes the foundation and the starting point of the new German philosophy,” and “an added reason for these frequent references in the objective logic is that Kantian philosophy delves deeply into important, more specific aspects of the logic.”<sup>1</sup> Hegel effectively only uses Kant’s conception of logic as the subject matter of critical investigation in “Subjective Logic” or “Doctrine of Concept.” For example, at the beginning of “Doctrine of Concept,” Hegel uses more than half of the space to analyze sentence-by-sentence Kant’s thought on logic. Kant exposes the subjective and abstract (rigidified) character of traditional formal logic, but never gets out of the trap of these two defects. Why is this so? Hegel thinks it is mainly because Kant views logic at the outset as ready-made instruments of some sort or as pre-fabricated means of understanding external to the subject matter. Though Kant wished to first examine the tools of cognition beforehand prior to cognition, since this examination by itself amounts to cognition, it already uncritically accepts traditional formal logic’s overall way of considering itself as performing external processing on the object or subject matter under examination. Formal logic had considered objects as static and standing in isolation, until he discovered through analysis that the essence

of cognition is nothing other than self-consciousness's synthetic unity of apperception. He saw this unity as the power of simply connecting together mutually disconnected things, however, and consequently never truly put the synthesizing function of this power into effect. Kant simply never took the examination of logical categories or determinations seriously, and hence no cognition of their nature ever developed in any way from this kind of philosophy. Hegel insists, "the finite determinateness in which that form is as 'I,' as consciousness, must be shed,"<sup>2</sup> and it must become the infinite form of pure thought capable of the self-determination of supplying for itself the content necessary for pure thought. In other words, Hegel is not opposed to the formality of formal logic. Rather, he believes that formal logic is weak not because it lacks the material to fill it (for which reason it is empty), but for the reason that these forms do not actively posit their own content by themselves, contented as they are with abstractness of form:

More to the point is that the emptiness of the logical forms lies rather solely in the manner in which they are considered and dealt with. Scattered in fixed determinations and thus not held together in organic unity, they are dead forms and the spirit which is their vital concrete unity does not reside in them.<sup>3</sup>

It is usually thought that the contents of formal logic should be sought outside of the forms, such as in empirical material and emotional content. In fact, the content of formal logic consists in precisely these forms: those active, organic, concrete, unifying relations are the self-negating spirit contained within these forms. The form (or content) understood in this way is the "absolute form" or "infinite form," and the logic of "form" thus understood is by itself speculative logic. Visibly here, Hegel understands "form" (εἶδος) in (Plato's) and Aristotle's sense of the term insofar as he views form as the essence, truth and "Idea" of the thing. He demands the form to posit the content all by itself. He thereby turns the form into an active totality. This infinite form whose content is itself the logical Idea:

More exactly, the Absolute Idea itself has only this for its content, namely that the formal determination is its own completed totality, the pure content. [...] determinateness does not have the shape of a content, but that it is simply as form, and that accordingly the idea is the absolutely universal idea.<sup>4</sup>

The highest vista of the entire *Logic* is effectively that of the absolute form, namely the viewpoint of the method: "This is what Aristotle already designated as the highest form of the idea."<sup>5</sup> "The true content, meanwhile, is nothing but the entire system, the development of which we have considered up to this point." All of its rich determinateness will eventually revert back into this absolute form.<sup>6</sup>

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Hegel does not after all describe his *Logic* as “formal” logic. On the contrary, he strictly distinguishes this “absolute form” of logic from ordinary formal logic, or in other words, he strictly distinguishes the logic of speculation from the “logic of the understanding.” He points out that, in the logic of the understanding, “thinking counts here as a merely subjective and formal activity, while what is objective, in contrast to thinking, counts as something firm and on hand for itself.”<sup>7</sup> In speculative logic “instead it is the subjectivity itself that, as dialectical, breaks through its limitation and by means of the syllogism discloses itself to be objectivity.”<sup>8</sup> Hegel’s intensely critical attitude toward the logic of the understanding often arouses disgust in those who engage the study of logic, insisting that such criticism and ridicule of formal logic goes overboard and is simply unreasonable. However, Hegel in fact offers no shortage of enthusiastic praise of traditional formal logic. For instance:

[A] step forward that these universalities have been brought to light and made the subject of study on their own, as was done by Plato, and after him by Aristotle especially; this step marks the beginning of our knowledge of them.<sup>9</sup>

In his opinion, the usefulness of formal logic is perfectly evident: “it clears the head,” “one learns to concentrate, to abstract,” and “by this means, the habit is acquired of preoccupying oneself with the interiority [of things].”<sup>10</sup> It allows one to go beyond everyday sensuous things and particular representations and achieve one’s own freedom in the consciousness of universality, by which the human being becomes distinct from animals.

So, why exactly is Hegel opposed to formal logic? The general belief is that Hegel opposes the abstractness and emptiness of formal logic, as well as its subjective externality. This is certainly true. But I think that, essentially, Hegel opposes the incompleteness of formal logic. In other words, formal logic still is not formal enough; it is still somewhere on the path of reaching but falling short of absolute form or infinite form (in his view, only form can achieve the infinite, whereas material is always finite). Therefore, the form of formal logic itself became finite content; it became one big pile of fragmentary determinations, entering “consciousness separately and so are variable and mutually confusing,”<sup>11</sup> one big pile of formless stuff (material). In other words, formal logic never took seriously the study of its own formal determinations and categories, allowing them to be dominated by the sensuous contents of the subject matter, so it seems that these categorial determinations are themselves just another kind of finite representation. As he has pointed out in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

then these determinatenesses are not lacking in content since they in fact have a determinate content. What they lack is form, which is their essence. In fact, it is not because they are supposed to be only formal and to have

no content that these laws are not the truth of thinking; rather, it is for the very opposite reason, namely, because it is in their determinateness, or just as a content from which the form has been taken.<sup>12</sup>

Hegel, inversely, is advocating that the forms of formal logic is itself to be investigated as the truth:

Even if there were nothing more to the forms of logic than these formal functions of judgment, for that reason alone they would already be worthwhile investigating to see how far, by themselves, they correspond to the truth—but it is necessary to go further and determine both the systematic connection of these forms and their value.<sup>13</sup>

So Hegel calls his *Logic* “the science of the absolute form.”<sup>14</sup> He insists that the logic existing at present is only “a natural description of the phenomena of thought as they simply occur.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, although the original intention behind formal logic had been to get rid of the limits imposed on us by feelings, purposes and interests, so as to turn the human into a free being, once forms of thinking emerge, they immediately become that which limits the human being:

Our thought must accord with them, and our choice or freedom ought not to want to fit them to its purposes. Thus, inasmuch as subjective thought is our own most intimately inner doing, and the objective concept of things constitutes what is essential to them, we cannot step away from this doing, cannot stand above it, and even less can we step beyond the nature of things.<sup>16</sup>

Thinking in this way is not a medium allowing us to (freely) connect with things, but instead a means used to separate us from things while merely providing a finite end, which dispossesses formal logic of its “value of form”—which is to say, formal logic thereby loses the significance it originally had in Aristotle, that of active, self-actualizing, freedom of spirit. Hegel points out:

The profounder foundation is the soul standing on its own, the pure concept which is the innermost moment of the objects, their simple life pulse, just as it is of the subjective thinking of them. To bring to consciousness this logical nature that animates the spirit, that moves and works within it, this is the task. The broad distinction between instinctive act and act which is intelligent and free is that the latter is performed consciously; when the content that motivates a subject to action is drawn out of its immediate unity with the subject and is made to stand before it as an object, then it is that the freedom of spirit begins, the same spirit who, when thought is an instinctive activity, is caught up in the web of its categories and is splintered into a material of infinite variety [...] to purify



these categories and in them to elevate spirit to truth and freedom, this is therefore the loftier business of logic.<sup>17</sup>

Hegel's dissatisfaction with formal logic is visible from this, which is not due to some incompatibility between formal logic and dialectical logic. Rather, it is due to formal logic lacking the intelligence of self-consciousness. While formal logic already implicitly embodies the free nature of human thinking, it is not however self-conscious of this nature, "[t]he most important point for the nature of spirit is the relation, not only of what it implicitly is in itself to what it actually is, but of what it knows itself to be to what it actually is."<sup>18</sup> Formal logic allows it that "the true may be associated with limitation and finitude."<sup>19</sup> This originally active, self-moving form became an abstract, hollow framework and then turned into a simple means of arbitrary employment, dispossessed of its own content that it posited by itself. In other words, Hegel's accusations against formal logic for abstractness and subjectivity are ultimately rooted in his accusation against formal logic for the defect of ignoring the free activity of thinking. He insists that in order to fix this defect, the only thing that can be done is to give or (more precisely) to restore form with the spirit of free activity that it originally had. With this spirit, the form will automatically posit itself as the content, and this content will also have the form of objective necessity. In this way, both of formal logic's defects of abstractness and subjectivity (externality) are fixed simultaneously. In this sense, speculative logic (dialectical logic) is not completely opposed to the logic of the understanding (formal logic), but is rather itself the true and absolute sense of "formal logic," which contains traditional formal logic within itself but transcends and overcomes the latter's finitude while developing the true content that is latent within the latter itself. Therefore, Hegel argues, "[t]he mere logic of the understanding is contained in the speculative logic and can instantly be extracted from it. Nothing more is needed for this than to remove the dialectical and the rational from it."<sup>20</sup> What Hegel calls "the dialectical and rational" components here are not added to the logic of the understanding from outside of itself. Rather, the logic of the understanding implicitly possesses the dialectical and rational in itself but in undeveloped form. That is to say, speculative logic's negation of formal logic, in Hegel, is but formal logic negating itself by itself; it is the self-consciousness and reflexivity that formal logic itself attains, or true, complete reflection (*Reflexion*).

The philosophical representatives of modern mathematical logic proceed from the basic standpoint of formal logic but stubbornly resist and oppose such "reflexivity." They have seen that "all paradoxes have a common feature, which we can call self-reference or reflexivity."<sup>21</sup> They also try out every means available to eliminate this paradox and its root causes. For example, Bertrand Russell tries to eliminate through linguistic analysis the basic principle of contradiction in Hegel's dialectic. That is, something is both "itself" ( $s$  is  $p$ ) and is "not itself" ( $s$  is not  $p$ ) from the same point of view. One of the

examples goes as follows: (1) Socrates is human; (2) Socrates is not human (is not equal to “human” because there are other human beings as well, or, all those who are “non-Socrates” are also human). Russell accordingly asserts that Hegel completely confuses the different meanings of the word “is” in these two propositions, namely in (1) “is” means having some “attribute,” but in (2) “is” means “equal to.” Russell claims the dialectical contradiction disappears as long as this distinction holds: (2) does not negate (1). Russell’s analysis of the dialectical contradiction (which although shallow, contagiously sows confusion) is rejected by R. Pippin.<sup>22</sup> But those who hold such criticism do not understand the problem at all, and Hegel holds this problem to be the core of his account. His entire point is that the above-mentioned “is” related to determining the essence must always remain one and the same “is.” In this sense, contradiction will surely arise in the above manner. That is to say, when speaking of some essence, Hegel firmly insists that we cannot satisfy ourselves with simply judging that some particular concept (or some other universal concept, as in the general essence) lays claim to a universal property. As Hegel consistently argues from beginning to end, “[w]hat we are interested in is not what property *s* has exactly, but exactly what *s* is so that it can have various properties.”<sup>23</sup> Hegel does not mean that all judgments are self-contradictory. Rather, he is saying that if a judgment is to become a judgment of essence, it will necessarily contradict itself; or in other words, if we are to understand any judgment (even an “attributive” judgment: “the leaf is green”) in terms of essence (for instance, understanding it as: particular is general), it is necessarily self-contradictory. “Human” is not a “property” of “Socrates,” but the “essence” of Socrates. The understanding of the word “is” in both propositions (1) and (2) is identical, and precisely because it is identical, there is contradiction, insofar as essence is self-contradiction, self-transcendence or self-negation.

Not seeing the intrinsic relationship between dialectical logic and formal logic brings about a whole series of misinterpretations of Hegel. In addition to the above examples, people also accuse Hegel of criticizing formal logic on the one hand while also writing his own articles using formal logic on the other; others, in order to defend Hegel, try very hard to rigorously distinguish dialectical contradiction from (formal) logical contradiction, arguing that Hegel does not in fact stand in opposition to formal logic, but rather speaks of contradiction in a completely different sense than that found in formal logic. In *Hegel’s Dialectical Logic*, Zhou Liquan gathers together five kinds of argument that Hegel makes about dialectical contradiction and analyzes them to demonstrate that dialectical contradiction does not violate formal logic’s law of contradiction in any way: (1) Being contains nothing. As Zhou explains, this means actual being contains potential non-being. Since actual and potential are not situated on the same level, being and nothing do not constitute logical contradiction. (2) A liquid is an acid, but it is also a base. Zhou insists that the contradictory side of acid can only be “non-acid,” and not “base,” so this does not constitute a logical contradiction either. (3) Life

contains the seed of death. But if the seed of death is understood as “the potentiality (possibility) of death,” then it is not contradictory with life, just as in (1); if it is understood as “partial death,” it is only a relation of whole and part, not contradiction. (4) Father and son. Father implies son, which is not equal to arguing father is “non-father” or son “non-son.” There is no logical contradiction in the semantic concepts of father and son. (5) Movement as such is contradiction. Zhou simplifies Hegel’s determination of movement (“at the same moment being both here and not here”) into: “A moving thing is H” (where H stands for said determination).<sup>24</sup> Then he states, “(a) the law of contradiction neither determines nor excludes whether a moving thing is H or not H; the law of contradiction only determines and stipulates that if a moving thing is H, then it cannot simultaneously be not H. (b) If the proposition or judgment ‘a moving thing is H’ is true and meaningful, then it must obey the law of contradiction. Because if it violates the law of contradiction, it will lead to ‘a moving thing is H and is not H,’” which is “a meaningless sentence.”<sup>25</sup> From the explanations of these five items, Zhou concludes that “[f]rom the point of view of Hegel’s specific argument about dialectical contradiction, dialectical contradiction is not a contradiction of the law of contradiction, and the law of the unity of opposites must also obey the law of contradiction.”<sup>26</sup>

It is not difficult to see that the two cases (2) and (4) mentioned above by Zhou are similar in nature. One of them is a relating of “differences” (acid and base), and the other a relating of opposites (father and son), but neither the one nor the other constitute a contradictory proposition. But in my opinion, this does not mean that they do not contain logical contradictions. Hegel believes that differences and oppositions are already potential contradictions and are in essence immediately convertible into contradictions. It is just that they presently have not yet sharpened to the degree of constituting contradiction. Logically, the only thing that contradicts acid is “non-acid,” but there is no such thing as “non-acid” in actuality (in determinate being or Dasein), and there are only many non-acidic things. However, this by no means implies that between the acidic and the non-acidic differences alone can exist while contradictions decidedly cannot. Where would the “dialectical” contradiction manifest otherwise? When the acidic and the non-acidic are one and the same thing, namely, when the acid is the base, such an actual difference would contain logical contradiction: an acid is an acid, and is also a non-acid, but it is more so a relation with an other (a base). Even though a base is not equal to a non-acid and is rather just a non-acidic thing, since it and the acid (or acidic thing) are the same thing, it therefore represents the non-acidic within this thing that is acidic, and stands in logical contradiction with the acid, which is to say it is the self-contradictory side of the acid itself. The No. (4) contradictory relationship is that between father and son, about which Hegel argues:

“Father” is the other of “son” and “son” the other of “father,” and each is only as this other of the other; and the one determination is at the same

time only with reference to the other; their being is one subsisting. The father is indeed something for itself outside this reference to the son, but then he is not “father” but a “man” in general.<sup>27</sup>

The issue of “semantics” is not mentioned here. Much less is Hegel referring to the concrete thing, the “blood relationship.” Hegel is instead referring to the logical relationship of the concepts. Father and son are opposite concepts and moreover two different concepts of the “human being.” So do they imply logical contradiction? Hegel makes it very clear: “Opposites entail contradiction inasmuch as, in negatively referring to each other, they sublate each other reciprocally and are indifferent to each other.”<sup>28</sup> Father is a father as the correlative of a son, but as one and the same human being, since he himself is still something else outside of this relationship, he is “not ‘father’ but a ‘man’ in general.” In this regard, the oppositional relation contains the contradictory relation in itself. Hegel means to expose within these examples of what seem only to be differences and opposites the substance of contradiction that they contain. As to what distinction holds between “dialectical contradiction” and “logical contradiction,” Hegel however never mentions it neither here nor elsewhere.

The two examples (1) and (3) in Zhou’s account above are also in fact reducible to one kind, and the misunderstanding is similar here. First of all, Zhou insists the conversion of being and nothing is that from potential to actual in Hegel, which is inaccurate. Hegel neither argues that nothing is potentially within being nor that being “latently” contains nothing. Precisely to the contrary, his claim is that pure being “when likewise taken immediately, is nothing.”<sup>29</sup> “Being, the indeterminate immediate is in fact nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing.”<sup>30</sup> He is rather saying that the difference between being and nothing “is at first only in itself, but not yet posited.”<sup>34</sup> Only in “becoming” is the difference between the two clearly posited. Therefore, being and nothing are not simply “actual being and potential nothing,” a difference of two different levels, as Zhou argues, but precisely a contradictory opposition on one and the same level. Secondly, life and death in example (3) is the relation of passing from nothing over into being and from being into nothing. These two are opposite processes, but they are also one and the same process: life does not just contain the “potential of death,” and even less so does it simply contain “partial” death, but instead comes into being in a movement toward death. In other words, the passage into life is by itself the passage into death and “non-life,” just as the ascending path is no more or less than the descending path.

The example of life and death shows us that Zhou understands dialectical contradiction from the standpoint of “the thing” rather than from the standpoint of “the process,” the movement, which is why he revises his phrasing in the fifth example. Instead of saying “the movement of things” as before, he says “moving things.” What Hegel illustrates is movement itself, movement as such, but Zhou wishes only to understand moving things. Even so, however, Zhou’s argument seems to be worthy of closer scrutiny. He argues that the law

of contradiction only requires that if a thing is H, it cannot simultaneously be not-H. But what is "H"? Based on the settings, H happens to be "at the same moment both here and not here." That is, a thing is simultaneously both K and not K, which already "violates" the law of contradiction. What Zhou wants to say is apparently that even while violating the law of contradiction, it is still necessary to comply with the law of contradiction. Therefore, even if the law of contradiction is violated at the level K, the law of contradiction is still observable at the level H. In other words, you cannot simultaneously and at the same level violate the law of contradiction and not violate the law of contradiction—which is itself agreeing with the law of contradiction. However, in fact, by conducting more precise analysis, we will see that "a moving thing is both H and not H" is not a "meaningless collection of words." Rather, it expresses exactly what H contains in itself. We will try to restore this proposition: "A moving thing is both (here and not here at the same moment) and not (here and not here at the same moment)." By removing the parentheses in the first half of the sentence, it becomes (a) "a moving thing is both here and not here at the same time," which is the original meaning of "H." There can be three cases if we remove the parentheses in the second half of the sentence: (b)<sub>1</sub> "A moving thing is here and not here at different moments," which is not the same thing as (a), and neither conflicts with nor contradicts it; (b)<sub>2</sub> "a moving thing is here and at the same point in time it is not the case that it is not here," which is precisely the articulation of the "is here" in (a), and so is also contained in (a); (b)<sub>3</sub> "a moving thing at the same moment in time instead of being here, is not here," which is precisely the articulation of the "is not here" in (a), and is therefore included in (a). We can see from the reduction of "a moving thing is H and is not H," that if we remove the brackets, it means nothing more than "a moving thing is both here and not here at the same time" (or at the very most add: it is also the case at different times). To say that it is "a meaningless collection of words" implies that it is meaningless to argue H and that the most famous dialectical proposition about movement is meaningless. So in principle, dialectical contradiction not only breaks through (and does not "violate") the law of contradiction, but even the non-contradictory formulation of dialectical contradiction could and must be itself included as a moment within the formulation of its contradiction. In this way, we could perhaps supplement Zhou's conclusion, "the law of the unity of opposites must comply with the law of contradiction," by adding: "The law of the unity of opposites must comply with the law of contradiction and must break through the law of contradiction," or "the law of the unity of opposites must itself comply with the law of the unity of opposites." Dialectical contradiction and (logical) contradiction to which the law of contradiction refers are actually the same kind of contradiction. The attempt to eliminate the color of logical contradiction within dialectical contradiction by dividing semantic levels is perfectly futile, as it will only dull down the dialectical contradiction. Basically, it is still the expression of "fearing contradiction" that Hegel so criticized.

Of course, I do not mean to depreciate in any way the law of contradiction in formal logic. I just want to point out that for Hegel, dialectical contradiction is the product of formal logic's law of contradiction (which strictly speaking is "the law of non-contradiction") concretizing of itself. It is this concretization of itself that causes a law of formal logic to negate itself by itself and consequently rise to the level of dialectical logic, but the law of identity and the law of contradiction are not thereby thrown out; they are instead employed as lower-level rules in the service of lower-level ends. In Hegel, the dialectical method's self "expression" is a lower-level end in comparison with the semantic level of its sense, so he still organizes language in accordance with formal logic, but even though the level of expression serves inferior ends, it is also indispensable. Without expression, there would be no certainty in semantics. Expression at the end of the day, however, cannot stand as the ultimate goal. Hegel strives to explain that the laws of formal logic themselves break their own limitations in the actual employment of them and reveal the dialectical, self-contradictory nature of logic. In actuality, people obey the law of identity  $A = A$ , but absolutely no one directly uses this formula to form speech (no one says, for instance, "the sun is the sun," "a plant is a plant" etc.). Every meaningful sentence always articulates difference, opposition and even contradiction within identity at the same time. As Vladimir Lenin points out:

With any proposition: the leaves of a tree are green; John is a man; Fido is a dog, etc. Here already we have dialectics (as Hegel's genius recognized): the individual is the universal. [...]

Thus in any proposition we can (and must) disclose as in a "nucleus" ("cell") the germs of all the elements of dialectics, and thereby show that dialectics is a property of all human knowledge in general.<sup>31</sup>

Dialectical logic clearly does not "violate" formal logic, but instead deepens and concretizes it. Hegel for this reason frequently refers to speculative logic as "logic" without any fear of others confusing it with the "logic of the past" or formal logic.

However, this distinction between expression and semantics is not clearly formulated in Hegel's works. Hegel believes his expressions are completely consistent with the semantics of his words because he puts so much effort into expression. He turns his system into an expressive system composed of "syllogisms" of many different sizes, but he never specifically theorizes about his own language, which often appears self-contradictory content-wise, but is perfectly grammatical in form.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps he thought declaring this point would have been as absolutely redundant as declaring that his book must be printed on white paper with black ink—a completely extrinsic consideration. As for studying the relation between his expressive language and what he semantically means, it seems he was not even conscious of such a need. Hegel took too lightly a point of great importance, namely that most of the terms he used were taken from everyday speech, which in turn offers the criticism

of Hegel's method by linguistic analysis ample room, as Fulda notices.<sup>33</sup> The linguistic origin of Hegel's dialectic blinds him to the importance of language that is unreflective of *logos* and *ontology* and ignores the sense (*Meinung*) of everyday forms of speech. But analytic philosophy does not capture many opportunities to attack Hegel here. When people say that the semantic vagueness and variability of Hegel's terminology do not permit deductions in accordance with "the law of identity," they do not notice that this fuzziness is not that of the "sense" of everyday representations. On the contrary, Hegel understands more precisely a concept's "own" implications than does your common, natural consciousness and even your average linguistics scholar of semantics. Hegel is, one would venture to say, "overly precise," because he traces back the implications of the roots of German words similar to how Martin Heidegger traces back the implications of ancient Greek words. The vagueness and variability of his terminology is caused by the "self-movement" of the concept itself. It is only "fuzzy" for those who do not observe the concept from the viewpoint of movement. Therefore, when Hegel (obviously, in quite deliberate fashion) uses formal logic's law of identity to express those self-differentiating conceptual movements that cause sharp semantic contradictions, for such contradictions are exactly what he wants to derive. Such contradictions between expressions and semantics cause consistent surprise and ridicule among those habitually accustomed to formal thinking, but people also have to admit that such contradictions are the unique expressions of dialectical logic, which only makes use of the law of identity of formal logic, without however appealing to it. Of course, dialectical logic is even less considerable as computer input insofar as it appeals to another even more profound capacity of the human being, which is experience.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel 2010, 40.
- 2 Ibid., 46.
- 3 Ibid., 27.
- 4 Hegel 2010, 735.
- 5 Hegel 1991, 299.
- 6 Ibid., 300.
- 7 Ibid., 264
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Hegel 2010, 14.
- 10 Hegel 1991, 54.
- 11 Hegel 2010, 17.
- 12 Hegel 2018, 175.
- 13 Hegel 2010, 525
- 14 Ibid., 523.
- 15 Ibid., 525.
- 16 Ibid., 16.
- 17 Ibid., 17.



- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid., 18.
- 20 Hegel 1991, 132.
- 21 Whitehead and Russel (1982)
- 22 See (Pippin 1980, 48–9).
- 23 Zhou 1989, 173–6.
- 24 Ibid., 176–7.
- 25 Ibid., 177.
- 26 Hegel 2010, 383.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Hegel 1991, 138.
- 29 Hegel 2010, 59.
- 30 Hegel 1991, 140.
- 31 Lenin 1976, 359–60.
- 32 Consider his analyses of the following propositions, “all determination (positive) is negation,” “being is nothing,” “identity is in itself already difference” etc., none of which conflicts with formal logic in any way—these analyses do not rely on tricky maneuverings with language and are actually quite simple.
- 33 Fulda’s “Scattered Notes on the Dialectic” in (Horstmann 1978, 44).



## 2 Dialectical logic and experience

The term “experience” (*Erlebnis*) joined the list of extremely important concepts for modern Western hermeneutics with the works of Wilhelm Dilthey. *Erlebnis* derives from the verb *erleben* in German with the meaning of lived experience or having experienced personally. Its stem is *leben*—life, to live—showing *erleben* or experience is closely related to the living and existential experience of the human being. Differing from Chinese people’s joyful and brilliant feeling of “enlarging the capacity of one’s affective mind to experience things in the world,” the Westerner’s life experience is always accompanied by pain, darkness and ugliness inside of the person’s mind, that is, a negative spirit, to the effect that Hegel even calls experiencing pain (negative feeling) the privilege of living things.<sup>1</sup> So, when it comes to experience or lived experience, Westerners often associate it with pain, contradiction and the feeling of strangeness. Helmuth Plessner, a well-known contemporary philosophical anthropologist, believes that pain and strangeness are necessary conditions of personal lived experience:

To learn to see not only unfamiliar life but also one’s own environment, country and traditions and its great personalities with other eyes is the art of the humanities, which, activated by a genuine experience: i.e. pain, destroys the complacency of the familiar so that it falls away like scales from our eyes. It awakens a fresh perception in us, liberates our vision and gives it resolve in the face of prejudice whose role is to deflect and cover up but the courage to perceive the world directly can only be found in a skeptical age shaken all the way to its core. That lived experience of weirdness can only be summoned by something that nourishes one’s own lived experience, only the pain of disappointment makes one sensitive. Pains are the eyes of the spirit.<sup>2</sup>

“Defamiliarizing” and making strange have become important means for arousing authentic experiences in humanity in all modern humanities and arts.

Hegel’s dialectical logic is the most successful attempt to make people understand and experience the essence of dialectics by using the method of “making strange.” He deliberately overturns the framework of formal logic

so ingrained in Western thinking from 2,000 years of practice so as to take the habitual for the eternal, placing expressions and semantics in the sharpest of contradictions. He forces people to imbibe the “bitter wine of disappointment” for the sake of enabling them to summon anew the power to acutely sense and experience fresh life. He wants people to see what is truly universal and long-lasting within this overturning that “shakes one to the core.” That which is universal, Hegel argues:

Even when it posits itself in a determination, remains in it what it is. It is the soul of the concrete which it inhabits, unhindered and equal to itself in its manifoldness and diversity. It is not swept away in the becoming but persists undisturbed through it, endowed with the power of unalterable, undying self-preservation.<sup>3</sup>

This is the free activity of the concept, the nature of “self-movement.” The innermost and deepest ground of the dialectic is not the external reasoning of formal logic, but rather one’s immediate experience of the concepts shaped in one’s own mind and the relationship of movement between concepts. It relies on such experience to grasp the essence and general law of things. Formal logic does not talk about experience; it is based on the set of formal rules stipulated in advance (by others), and is reducible to mathematical breakdowns and combinations; it may deduce singular conclusions according to relations of the distributed (All ...) and undistributed (Some ...) types; it is entirely operational, indicatable by using blocks or symbols:

What first led to this wayward attempt is above all the quantitative relation in which universality, particularity, and singularity are supposed to stand to one another: universal means, more extensive than particular and singular; and particular, more extensive than singular.<sup>4</sup>

But its nature is totally misunderstood.<sup>5</sup> [...] It is futile to want to fix it by means of spatial figures and algebraic signs for the sake, of the *outer eye* and a *non-conceptual, mechanical manipulation*, such as a calculus. [...] [H]owever, if one insists on employing such symbols for expressing and cognizing the concept, then it is not their external nature which is fit for the task; the reverse relation applies, namely that what in the symbols is the echo of a higher determination is recognized to be such only by virtue of the concept, and it is only by shedding the sensuous standbys that were supposed to express it that one comes closer to the concept.<sup>6</sup>

This seems to be very close to the ancient Chinese tradition of “grasping the intended sense and forgetting the linguistic expression,” or “catching the fish and forgetting the net.”

Interestingly, Hegel, who has such insight into the nature of formal logic, does not create another systematic set of conceptual symbols to replace

formal logic, nor does he embark on the path of Zhuangzi or the path of Chan Buddhism, that of abandoning language and that of obscure realizations, but he instead utilizes those “fully ready and well-entrenched, one may even say ossified, materials” and stipulates his own mission as rendering these ready-made materials “fluid,” as “re-kindling” life in them.<sup>7</sup> How is Hegel to “re-kindle” life in them? Certainly not by setting them alight from the outside, but by immediately generating “friction” inside of such material, so that the deadened material releases, by intrinsic thermodynamics, the heat and energy within it. What people who are accustomed to formal thinking see is Hegel tossing these materials all-around and reducing them to ash, and they yell at him for it. Not knowing what he is doing or what he is aiming to do, they lack the eyes of spirit necessary to see that, while these materials are burning to ash under his watch, they simultaneously emit the radiance of the dialectic’s living movement, the brilliance of its active vitality. They seem to experience the “pain” and “disappointment” in vain, and get in return nothing but a sense of “strangeness.”

Of course, Hegel does put in some effort looking for words and terminology unique to the dialectic. He declares his commitment “to recognize the speculative spirit of the language in them,”<sup>8</sup> speaking of German words. But in the end, there are not so many terms that he certifies as appropriate for dialectical expression (in English, words like “speculation,” “sublation,” “moment,” “polarity,” “development” etc.). He is often troubled by the lack of suitable words at hand. For example, he expresses dissatisfaction with the extremely unfortunate word “unity” many times, thinking that it “expresses wholly abstract sameness.” “For this reason it would therefore be better to say simply unseparatedness and inseparability; but then the affirmative aspect of the connection of the whole would not be expressed.”<sup>9</sup> Despite his dissatisfaction, he uses the word “unity” everywhere, hoping that, while reading, the readers will not find themselves restricted by the literal meaning of this term, but will instead experience its “immanent plasticity,” because he insists that “[n]o subject matter is so absolutely capable of being expounded with a strictly immanent plasticity as is thought in its own necessary development.”<sup>10</sup> When the *Logic* accounts for those thought determinations of traditional logic, such expositions as those rich in immanent plasticity will also reconstruct other thought determinations “that instinctively and unconsciously pervade our spirit everywhere—and remain non-objectified and unnoticed even when they enter language.”<sup>11</sup> But Hegel also observes that “[a] plastic discourse demands, too, a plastic receptivity and understanding on the part of the listener.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, the literal expression also depends on the receiver’s lived experience of penetrating through the literal meaning deep inside where her own inner plasticity comes to light. He laments that in modern times, it is much harder to find than in Plato’s day and age those audiences and readers who listen to words attentively and experience words mindfully. “On the contrary, all too often and all too vehemently have I been confronted by opponents incapable of the simple consideration—taking for a category

under consideration something other than this category itself.”<sup>13</sup> That is to say, they think of something extrinsic to the point. Hegel tasks his *Logic* with this very mission, that is, to make the reader regain that plasticity of a speculative attitude. “But this culture and discipline of thought by which the latter acquires plasticity and overcomes the impatience of incidental reflection is procured solely by pressing onward, by study, and by carrying out to its conclusion the entire development.”<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, for Hegel, the true grounds of dialectical logic are not fixed formal laws, but the content-rich and fully plastic internal experiences of these laws, which became the theme of actual discussion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, from which, Heidegger for example, wrests the crucial word *Erfahrung*, by which he means experience with existential significance. Ye Xiushan points out: Heidegger’s

grasp of experience [*Erfahrung*] in effect seized hold of the key point of Hegel’s phenomenology, which is that Hegel transforms the concept of “experience” on the basis of absolute idealism and integrates it with the entire cultural “history” of human spirit [...] Thus we could argue that “experience” in what Hegel calls “the experience of consciousness” is the experience of “historical passage.”<sup>15</sup>

In effect, not only in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* but also in the *Science of Logic*, the act of thought playing the ultimate role is also an “experience.” The entirety of the *Science of Logic* is founded on this kind of experience. There are no external, fixed tools or eternal, unchanging laws upon which we can reliably depend to facilitate the transitions and transformations of being, nothing, becoming, quality, quantity, degree, essence, appearance, actuality and so on. Instead, one should merely take these categories as “preludes” and “reminders,” and by calling up many instances from everyday life, allow oneself to learn from experience and come to “realizations.” Failing to grasp this point, but still wishing to determine Hegel’s terminology and “what it means” by reference to extrinsic logical rules, this amounts to an exercise in futility. According to Fulda, some people like J.M.E. McTaggart insist that a term can only be interpreted according to the position it occupies within the entirety of Hegel’s system, which is one-sided, while others like Andreas Speiser believe that a term is initially only defined with one sense, but it produces in the manner of an invariable operation the entire system “from the bottom up,” so the minimum value of the term is determined by the rules of linguistic communication while using abstract terminology,<sup>16</sup> and this idea is the one-sided opposite of the first. However, Fulda’s own explanation is nothing but a reconciliation of these two extremes (top-down and bottom-up). He proposes that it is characteristic of dialectical logic to use terms that gradually evolve to where they belong in the system in the process of learning, a process comparable to playing chess, whose rules are determinable.<sup>17</sup> This interpretation, like the two views Fulda is criticizing, fails to grasp the fundamental difference

between the terms of dialectical logic and those of ordinary logical systems. That is, dialectical logic's terms must follow laws or rules that come not from outside of itself, but that instead come into being and get experienced inside of dialectical logic itself. It is impossible to find some external systematic structure or formal rules divorced from such content of lived experience. For Hegel, what superficially seems like "the system," "the rules" or "the framework" are actually just the path marks or steps of experiencing it and getting to know it. Fulda also talks about the implicit usage of Hegel's terminology, but he was much keener to make specifications of the "external explicability" of Hegel's terminology and system. Jerome Seymour Bruner conversely argues that the progression of dialectical concepts is not determined by external rules or the total framework, but is determined by "the thing itself" (*die Sache selbst*). What the next concept is, he argues, needs to be determined based on the concrete case at hand, and the force compelling you to go beyond the present concept and think of another concept only comes into being after concentrating one's energy on precisely and completely grasping the present concept.<sup>18</sup> I argue that explicating or speaking solely about one word or sentence without keeping this point in mind makes grasping the laws of dialectical movement impossible. What the dialectical method investigates is subject matter developing in history, in the movement of life, so it is concrete subject matter; it is an object that "changes," that negates itself, precisely when you wish to determine and define it. Only human experience can follow this process, or to use Heidegger's wording, only Being-there (*Dasein*) can peer into the window of the substance of Being, while formal logic can only cope with "beings" (*Seiende*). Hans-Georg Gadamer traces hermeneutics (*Hermeneutik*) back to Hegel, insisting hermeneutics is already the ground in Hegel's dialectic of spirit and this hermeneutic not only interprets each sentence with respect to the logical value of it but also understands it as a reply, and since the hermeneutic can indeed obtain the meaning that each statement expresses from the motivational background of its historical context, it can go beyond the logically understandable content spoken.<sup>19</sup> We should add that human experience is not just following where concrete things are going or "replying" to some questions posed. Human experience is by itself the vital movement of questioning, of becoming, of negating oneself, of sustaining oneself through the pain of negating oneself. Therefore, experience's "chasing" of life is not passively "reflecting" it; experience is instead the immediate identity of subjective and objective, the inner source of active creation and all subjective freedom. In Hegel's eyes, this then illustrates the creative authority of spirit and demonstrates that the true object, the substance, is but the product of spirit itself, so dialectical logic in Hegel's sense could be called "anthropomorphic" or "theomorphic" logic. Hegel's "pan-logicism" constitutes his own unique form of pantheism and the manner by which he expresses the subjectivity of freedom.

However, we should also see here that Hegel's thought here is not expressed explicitly, because he is a rationalist. In his view, the factor of *nous* or spirit's

vital impulse that reveals what is behind logical thought, although certainly important, is not as important as limiting this impulse, or rather, expressing this impulse in the form of logic and concepts, that is, expressing the spirit of *logos*. This double meaning of reason constitutes the content and form of reason respectively: “[l]ogical reason must be essentially recognizable, when regarded as formal, also in the reason that is concerned with a content; indeed, no content can be rational except by virtue of the rational form.”<sup>20</sup> This unity relating them most prominently shows in Hegel’s simultaneously appreciative and critical attitude toward “intellectual intuition.”

Intellectual intuition here is a reference to what Baruch de Spinoza presents as the highest form of cognition, which can immediately grasp truth while bypassing sensuous experience and deductive argument. Kant conversely proposes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that sensibility is the power of intuition without the power of thought, whereas intellect, what Kant calls the understanding, can think but cannot intuit, which, for human knowledge, renders intellectual intuition impossible. Kant does however conceive of the possibility of intuitive intellect later on in the *Critique of Pure Judgment*. Hegel insists “this is a profound determination,”<sup>21</sup> which “is the universal simultaneously thought as concrete in itself,” and “would have been particularly suited for introducing consciousness to the process of grasping and thinking the concrete idea.”<sup>22</sup> That is to say, here we begin to touch upon the concrete concept of singularity that unites the universal and the particular within itself, which implies thinking, that is, it implies the concept actively creating the thought of an actual (sensible) thing. This thought is already somewhat implicitly revealed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* with regard to the schematism of the understanding and the transcendental imagination. This schema of time and imagination of time is the bond that ties together the understanding with intuition; it is an intuitive understanding or intellectual intuition, but Kant never saw and understood this point, in Hegel’s view.<sup>23</sup> Kant always conceives of intellectual intuition as a transcendent possibility beyond experience, which is only found in God, to the effect that he uses it without self-consciously knowing it. Jacobi’s immediate knowledge in some sense represents a retreat from Spinoza. He calls his conception of intellectual intuition “reason” or “faith” in order to set it in opposition with the ordinary understanding. Hegel deems wholly vacuous Jacobi’s idea of a pure intuitive understanding or faith that excludes from itself all mediation and thought, because, although all knowledge may be termed immediate, all immediate knowledge is likewise mediated in itself.<sup>24</sup> Static intuition cannot express the vital impulse of life, and in Hegel’s view, “[a]ll thinking is immediate. But this very thinking is a process within itself, it is movement and vitality, all vitality is internal movement or internal process, it is mediated. This is even more the case with spiritual vitality.”<sup>25</sup> Hegel digs out by way of this interpretation an aspect that is “justified” in Jacobi’s thought, which is that there lies “in this standpoint [of immediate knowing] the great [truth] that to accept that the human spirit knows God immediately is to acknowledge human freedom, the

human spirit.”<sup>26</sup> It is just that this freedom in Jacobi is merely the subjective, abstract freedom that is devoid of the creative power to objectify itself.

Hegel's attitude toward intellectual intuition is most concentrated when expressing his criticism of Schelling, who took the thought of intellectual intuition from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, and considered it the “organ” of all transcendental philosophy.<sup>27</sup> Schelling insists that is a “third” between sensible intuitions and transcendental concepts, which reconciles the opposition between the two. This third as the absolute unity of contradictions is what Schelling calls intellectual intuition.<sup>28</sup> Hegel has three criticisms of Schelling's intellectual intuition: (1) It is singular and contingent. There are those who have it and those who do not. Those who do possess it, do so thanks not to universal reason but to talent or genius, so its necessity remains undefined, and definition is what it lacks.<sup>29</sup> (2) It is passive observation and exists only implicitly. Hegel says of the imitators of Schelling,

instead of remaining in the [concept] and recognizing it as the unresting ego, they have lighted on the opposite extreme of passive intuition, of immediate Being of fixed implicitude; and they think that they can make up for the lack of fixity by superficial observation, and can render this observation intellectual by determining it once more by some fixed [concept] or other.<sup>30</sup>

(3) It is not the unification of concept and intuition grounded in the concept, but the unification of the concept within the intuition, so intuition here is not the intuition of concepts or concrete intuition, but the intuition of representations; it is sensible intuition and feeling, emotion and so on. This is the most important aspect, which differentiates Hegel's intuition from Schelling's at the fundamental level. Hegel criticizes Schelling, arguing: “by their principle, [concept] and [intuition] are one unity, but in point of fact this unity, this spirit, itself emerges in immediacy, and is therefore in intuitive perception, and not in the [concept].”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, in the philosophy of Schelling, “the content, the Truth, has become once more the matter of chief importance.”<sup>32</sup> “But the true process,” Hegel writes, “could only be traced out by means of logic, for it contains pure thoughts, but the logical point of view was what Schelling never arrived at in his presentation of things.”<sup>33</sup> The necessity of the content is not revealed and developed through the concept itself, and the content thus falls to the custody of irrationalism, illogicalism, which turns it into a matter of uncertain poetic blabbering, an oracle of arbitrary judgment. Hegel also argues in the *Philosophy of Mind*:

[I]ntuition is consciousness *filled* with the certainty of Reason, whose object is *rationally* determined and consequently not an individual torn asunder into its various aspects but a totality, a unified fullness of determinations. It was in this sense that Schelling formerly spoke of intuition. Mindless intuition is merely sensuous consciousness which



remains external to the object. Mindful, true intuition, on the contrary, apprehends the genuine substance of the object.<sup>34</sup>

Hegel's criticism of Friedrich Schleiermacher, another representative of Romanticism and the pioneer of modern hermeneutics, also applies to Schelling:

[Self-consciousness] thinks to know the unity of spirit immediately from itself, and in this immediacy to be possessed of knowledge in a poetic, or at least a prophetic manner. As regards the poetic manner, it has a knowledge of the life and person of the Absolute immediately, by an intuition, and not in the [Concept] [...] This poetry vacillates betwixt the universality of the [Concept] and the determinateness and indifference of the figure; it is neither flesh nor fish, neither poetry nor philosophy.<sup>35</sup>

This stern criticism from Hegel toward the "poeticized philosophy" of Schelling and the like easily gives the impression that Hegel stands in total opposition to intuitive experience. But as we saw before, what Hegel opposes are contingent, passive intuitions devoid of concept, not active, conceptually grounded intuitions with internal necessity. Precisely to the contrary, the latter kind of intuitions present, for Hegel, that which distinguishes the highest form of the *Logic* and the third moment of every syllogism, which is the characteristic of having passed through mediation and having returned to immediacy. This is the immediacy belonging uniquely to the concept itself, that is, to the concrete concept, which contains rich determinateness in itself but which is not a "complex." The concrete concept is something simple that is singular and active; it is the free power of grasping and synthesizing the totality of itself. As an immediacy, it is naturally an intuitive experience. As the "truth" of the first two moments of the syllogism, it is the inner motivating force and true soul of the whole process. Schelling never quite understands what this difference is between himself and Hegel. In that infamous letter in which Schelling parts ways with Hegel in 1807, he writes:

I confess that I do not comprehend the sense in which you oppose the *concept* to intuition. Surely you do not mean anything else by it than what you and I used to call the idea, whose nature it is to have one side which is concept and one from which it is intuition (from Munich, 2 November 1807).<sup>36</sup>

Schelling does not understand why Hegel had been so dissatisfied with the external mode of combining intuition and concept, "one side which and one [side] from which," by which Schelling had wished to conceptually deduce intuition. Such an intuition is itself an experience, but not sensuous experience (of feeling, of emotion, of representation); it is instead active lived experience, not experience in the form of artistic inspiration but that



grounded in universal logical form. But one point that Schelling makes is quite right: Hegel's concrete concept, the Idea, is the same as Schelling's Idea; both of them are the synthesis of intuition and concept. On this point, both Schelling and Hegel could admit that "[p]ure *intuiting* [...] is altogether the same as pure thinking."<sup>37</sup> However, Hegel insists that intellectual intuition is an "intuiting which is thinking," whereas Schelling insists on intuiting by itself to the effect that it became a simply more advanced sensuous intuition (artistic intuition).

This critical overcoming of Schelling could prove Hegel's strength on the one hand, but it also shows his weak point on the other. Hegel's strong point is that he was the first to give the profound thought of the dialectic a systematic and determinate form of logical expression, while it had previously only relied upon the intuitive experience of immediate perception, and this form of expression is not founded on poetic metaphor but on pure conceptual thought, on the profound consideration and rigorous analysis of the categories and laws of traditional formal logic, and on speculative reflection or the tracing back of thought. Even though such expression must still rely on experiences and "coming to realizations" at the end of the day, in order to fully actualize its expressive function, it does ultimately provide an actual method that is graspable and comprehensible, a method that, by disrupting the habitual cognitive patterns of formal logic, jump-starts and awakens the forces of intelligence inside of the human mind. The dialectic defamiliarizes, makes strange what is familiar and thereby inspires fresh intuitive experience; it raises to a higher level the certainty and unity of thinking's activity through negation and contradiction. That aside, Hegel was also the first to reveal the necessary links that conceptual thinking and the faculty of understanding share with the experience of freedom inside of the human being. He uncovered the dialectical unity of immediacy and mediacy, which is the act of thinking itself. In Hegel, thinking's role of active synthesis became the most fundamental creative principle, whose distinctive characteristic is objective actuality or the becoming-objective of itself. In the end, Hegel sublates the abstractness of concepts (however, still within the limits of abstractness that idealism sanctions) and enriches concepts with concrete content to the point of even giving concepts the vitality of the whole world's development. Content is not externally integrated into concepts. Rather, the concept actively develops the whole world out of itself. In thoroughly idealistic fashion, this expresses the true scientific principle of epistemologically developing from abstract to concrete.

However, at the same time, the fatal flaw of Hegel's philosophy is also revealed here, which is the abandonment of the experience of sensuous intuition (of emotion, of feeling, of sensation, of desire etc.), and the abandonment of the richness of the human being's sensations and perceptions, of actually sensing. Hegel formalizes the content of his lived experience with rational *logos* or logical forms, but ultimately inverts this content into the self-expression of logical form:

[N]amely, in that it differentiates itself internally and is the unity of its thus intelligible and determined differences. Only in this way does reason rise above the finite, the conditioned, the sensuous, or however one might define it, and is in this negativity essentially replete with content.<sup>38</sup>

Reason may fully possess its own content without the sensibility, so this content could only be the abstract content of pure reasoning. Even though Hegel again posits a unique “concrete” on this ground of abstract reason and concepts, this “concrete” is still abstract, divorced from particular universals. Benedetto Croce points this shortcoming out in Hegel from the standpoint of neo-Hegelianism, arguing that Hegel divorced thought from sensuous activity (or aesthetic activity) and consequently he “could not completely understand language.” Moreover, in Hegel:

[T]he sign is explicitly defined as an immediate intuition, which represents a content “altogether different from that which is its own.” By means of language the intelligence impresses its representation upon an external element. The form of language, therefore, is intellectual; it is the product of a logical instinct, which is afterwards theorized in grammar. Owing to this logical form, language tries to express the individual, but cannot do so. Thus, according to Hegel, does language confute itself, attempting to express the individual, and, on the contrary, always expressing the universal.<sup>39</sup>

However, Hegel is dissatisfied with this shortcoming, leaving him no choice but to use many representations of the sensuous world in order to express singular concrete things, while describing concepts (universal things) or alluding to them as sensuous concrete things. Of course, he avails himself of these metaphors out of rhetorical expediency, but in fact, these places are where people find pathways into understanding his dialectic. Without these metaphors, his dialectic is flat out completely incomprehensible. For example, in one place he insists on the difference between “pure thought,” the form of thinking and the impulse [*Trieb*] of sensibility.<sup>40</sup> But then he himself argues that the method, or “all concepts and their movements” are “but also reason’s highest and sole impulse.”<sup>41</sup> He advocates on the one hand not to start out from something inferior to grasp God: “Nature that is merely alive is indeed itself not yet that from which the true determination of the idea of God can be grasped. God is more than living, he is spirit.”<sup>42</sup> He also states, “the Absolute Idea alone is being, imperishable life.”<sup>43</sup> He always tries to explain representations of life and impulse with logic, but then turns around and expresses the movement of the logical concept with “the inner pulse of self-movement and life.”<sup>44</sup> Hegel roams in the “shadow” kingdom of the abstract Idea, but can never quite detach himself from the colorful and postural variations of the sensuous world, exposing great yearning for the sensuous

radiance of thought. When he finally spits it out about this experience of life-long roaming, he once again resorts to metaphor, stating:

When we are carrying on with our lives, the end in view may appear very restricted, but it is the whole *decursus vitae* [course of life] that is embraced together in it. In the same way and for the same reason, the content of the absolute Idea is the whole display that has passed before us up to this point.<sup>45</sup>

This constant return back to the immediate experience of the sensuous (course of life) shows—whether Hegel becomes conscious of it or not—the great emptiness and isolation that he feels doing the *Science of Logic* after divorcing it entirely from sensuous actuality. Thus, even though Hegel himself never champions the word *Erlebnis* as his own special term, we still see through it that experience in his *Logic* plays a really important role behind the scenes.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel 1991, 106.
- 2 Plessner 1982, 171–2.
- 3 Hegel 2010, 531.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 545.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*, 545–6.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 507.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 10 Hegel 1991, 40.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 15 Ye 1988, 124.
- 16 Fulda, “Scattered Notes to the Dialectic,” in (Horstmann 1978, 47).
- 17 *Ibid.*, 48.
- 18 Bruner 1978, 117.
- 19 Ritter & Gründer, “Historical Dictionary of Philosophy,” in (Philosophy Department of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 1986, 9).
- 20 Hegel 2010, 588.
- 21 Hegel 1995, 296.
- 22 Hegel 1991, 103–4.
- 23 Hegel 1896, 441.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 256.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 260.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 257.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 247.

- 28 Ibid., 351.
- 29 Ibid., 357.
- 30 Ibid., 369.
- 31 Ibid., 596.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., 518.
- 34 Hegel 1971, 199; italics in original.
- 35 Hegel 1896, 508.
- 36 Higgins & Solomon 2003, 213; italics in original.
- 37 Hegel 1991, 112.
- 38 Hegel 2010, 589.
- 39 Croce 1915, 124–5.
- 40 Hegel 1991, 60.
- 41 Hegel 2010, 737.
- 42 Hegel 1991, 99.
- 43 Hegel 2010, 735.
- 44 Ibid., 384.
- 45 Hegel 1991, 304.

### 3 The agreement of dialectical logic with epistemology

We are now in a position to understand why Hegel's dialectical logic is consistent with his epistemology. This consistency shows in Hegel's distancing of dialectical logic from external, mediating organs of knowledge, like formal logic. Dialectical logic is simultaneously, however, an immediate learning-experience of the object, so it is Truth itself; it is knowing itself or knowledge as such, which is not simply an unmediated, passive perceiving, but is instead a self-mediated developmental process of living movement, which unfolds as an evolution of logical form and simultaneously as an experience of cognitive growth, a concrete experience of growth ascending from the inferior state of abstractly knowing to the superior state of knowing more concretely.

Hegel argues:

It is the essence that has gone back to being as simple immediacy, the essence whose shining thereby has actuality and whose actuality is at the same time the process of freely shining in itself. In this manner the concept has being as its simple relation to itself or as the immediacy of its unity in itself.<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to this self-referring immediacy, the concept is not the form of thinking purified of all matter and content. The concept is not dead, empty or abstract; it is rather just the opposite: "The concept is the free [actuality] [*das Freie*], as the substantial power that is for itself." "The concept is instead the principle of all life and thereby, at the same time, something absolutely concrete."<sup>2</sup> Something concrete such as this is not sensuous or something manually tangible, but it envelops the plentiful content of all existence and essence within itself. "[L]ogical forms," therefore,

as forms of the concept, they are, to the contrary, the living spirit of the actual, and what is true of the actual is true only by virtue of these forms, through them, and in them. However, the truth of these forms for themselves, let alone their necessary connection, has never been considered and investigated until now.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, from the ordinary viewpoint, "the actual" is by itself indifferent to all questions of "true" or "untrue," for only human cognition of the actual is either true or untrue, but as Hegel sees it, "true" does not mean that thinking corresponds to being, but means rather that being corresponds to thinking, so it is in fact the side of being to which occurs the problem of true or untrue. In other words, only that which corresponds to thinking, to the concept is the actual, true being, and conversely, the problem of true or untrue does not occur to objective thinking, to the concept itself, which instead only faces the problem of pure or impure, that of concrete or not concrete (abstract). The pure concept, the concrete concept is necessarily true in and of itself. What we should pay attention to here is how the logical form of Hegel's concept is in itself the essence of immediate being, how it unfolds itself as the living spirit of actuality or as the progression of knowing and truth possessed of content that "freely shines in itself" as the force of independently existing substantiality.

People have already spoken well enough about Hegel's critique of Kantian agnosticism and of the formalistic abstractness of Kant's transcendental logic, so we do not have to repeat it here. What we aim to examine is rather how Hegel discovers and develops from what are ordinarily considered pure forms of thinking, namely the rules of judgment and deduction in formal logic, the objective content that such rules intrinsically have in themselves, how he transforms formal logic from a doctrine solely about the certainty (*Bestimmtheit*) of thinking into dialectical logic's doctrine about Truth (*Wahrheit*), how he turns logic into epistemology, how he makes it not only knowing "the connectivity of the system" but also knowing "the value of the form." However, prior to examining the judgments and deductions of formal logic, we have to first examine Hegel's concept of "a concept," because this is his basic starting point for understanding judgment and deduction.

Hegel argues, concepts according to the ordinary understanding does not refer to the faculty of concepts in general "but the faculty of determinate concepts, as if, as the prevailing opinion has it, the concept were only a determinate."<sup>4</sup> The faculty of the understanding in Kant puts concepts in such a passive position that the act of cognition in Kant's philosophy does not begin with concepts but with judgments, that is, with "synthetic a priori judgments," the uniting of a representation under a concept by the synthetic unity of transcendental apperception, for instance, the law of the conservation of matter: the quantity of matter remains constant through all changes in matter, where the concept of "matter" is determined by the representation "quantity remains constant," but the concept of "matter" does not contain in itself this quality of "constant quantity" (otherwise, it would not be a synthetic proposition but instead an analytic proposition), nor can this quality be deduced from the concept itself. In other words, this determination is completely external to it; it is added to the concept of matter by subjective human thought (even though Kant insists it possesses objective necessity a priori). Even though all actual matter does by itself possess the determinate quality

of “remaining constant,” considering what the concept of “matter” actually contains, logically speaking (in terms of formal logic), the concept of matter is still abstract and formal, and the determinate quality of it is added onto it externally. Hegel insists, “[f]or the judgment and the syllogism or reason, as formal, are themselves only a thing of the understanding, since they are subsumed under the form of the abstract determinateness of the concept.”<sup>5</sup> Hegel opposes this abstract formality of the concept and instead begins with the contents that concepts contain in themselves, viewing all determinate qualities of the concept as the concept’s own determinateness and considering synthesis as the concept’s synthesis of its own negative (synthesizing the other of itself into itself):

Because being which is in and for itself is immediately a positedness, the concept is in its simple self-reference an absolute determinateness which, by referring only to itself, is however no less immediately simple identity. But this self-reference of the determinateness in which the latter rejoins itself is just as much the negation of determinateness, and thus the concept, as this equality with itself, is the universal. But this identity equally has the determination of negativity; it is a negation or determinateness that refers to itself and as such the concept is the singular. [...] And this is a duality which in the differentiation of singular and universal appears to be perfect opposition, but an opposition which is so much of a reflective shine that, in that the one is conceptualized and said, immediately the other is therein conceptualized and said [...] The foregoing is to be regarded as the concept of the concept.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, this duality of the concept (singular and universal) is reflected or does not shine forth (*erscheinen*) in the concept’s own abstract form, or more precisely, it does not reflect on the word. For instance, when we hear the word “matter,” we may immediately think of that empty universality, that total generalization of everything with physical shape, but we could also think of varieties of concrete material forms. We could perhaps also fall into contentious debate: “is matter ultimately concrete or is it abstract?” Since we cannot blame this difference of interpretations of the same word on the difference of levels in the word, the difference can only emerge in the levels of unspoken sense, and this sense is not “unsayable” like the sense of sensuousness (for instance, the sense of “this”). On the contrary, this sense is conceptually grounded, so it is “sayable,” but it ultimately had not been said in this concept before. Therefore, if we wish to know what this concept ultimately means, aside from getting to know the literal sense of this concept, we still have to trace back “the genealogy of the concept,” that is, see how this concept began to take shape and mature in form, but the reversion of this tracing back is simultaneously a progression of advancing forward, which is to say, we have to examine how this concept demonstrates from itself those phases or stages of itself prior to its present state, how it expresses itself as a self-unfolding process of shaping

itself into the mature form of itself. Here, we enter the interrelation of the concept and “other concepts” referring to each other, but this interrelation is actually just the self-reference of one and the same concept, which is but one identical concept remembering itself and experiencing itself. The German word *Erinnerung* literally means “going inside of the mind” but could also be interpreted as “the experience of reminding.”

Thus, solely with the concept’s experience of synthesizing what is inside of itself can we see that the concept is not by any means externally and indifferently put together (*zusammengesetzt*) with determinateness, “for then it would be only posited together with it.”<sup>7</sup> It is instead an inward reflection:

The determinateness, as determinate concept, is bent back into itself; it is the concept’s own immanent character, a character made essential by being taken up into the universality and by being pervaded by it, just as it pervades it in turn, equal in extension and identical with it [...] Thus, even the determinate concept remains in itself infinitely free concept.<sup>8</sup>

The universality of the concept is not empty abstractness but rather active individuality and subjectivity pervaded by and enveloping particularity. As the concept attains this self-experience, it by itself enters the moment of its particularity and unfolds itself into the content that it envelops, which is judgment. Hegel argues, judgment is not a form of externally combining two concepts, “[i]t is the determining of the concept by itself,”<sup>9</sup> positing itself as that which is external or as particular content, which Hegel calls “the proximate realization of the concept.”<sup>10</sup> Although the concept’s formal identity is broken in this externalization and splits apart into two different concepts, namely into the subject and predicate, in content it still preserves substantive identity, because the formal subject is not the entire concept but merely a “noun,” one of the moments inside of the concept, whose intrinsic sense is determined by the predicate:

What it is, is first enunciated only by the predicate which contains being in the sense of the concept.<sup>11</sup>

When we ask for the predicate that belongs to such subjects, the required judgment must be based on a concept that is presupposed; yet it is the predicate that first gives this concept.<sup>12</sup>

Accordingly, the unity of the concept, although it seems to disappear in form owing to the separate positing of the subject and predicate, “it is by starting from the unity of the concept as ground that the judgment is considered in accordance with its true objectivity.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, what judgment expresses is not subjectively and arbitrarily taking two words and externally bridging them together, which would make it seem as if, were it not for this subjective act of uniting (judging), the two words would still have their own intrinsic meaning respectively. On the contrary, what judgment reflects is a concept’s own objective self-reference, without which the concept would



amount to nothing more than an empty, abstract noun or a vague subjective representation:

But the predicate which is combined with the subject should also pertain to it, which is to say, should be in and for itself identical with it. The significance of their being combined is that the subjective sense of judgment, and the indifferent external persistence of the subject and predicate, are again sublated.<sup>14</sup>

The predicate cannot be taken arbitrarily, but the proposition that formal logic understands, like “s is p,” refuses to determine p’s content in any way, such that p could seemingly be any determination, including determinations of the type “spirit is sweet.” Taken in this manner, the classification of the predicate and the laws governing the predicate would apparently amount to nothing more than a subjective conceptual game. Hegel argues, “the predicate, which is the universal, appears on the contrary as the reflection of this judgment on that object, or rather as the object’s immanent reflection.”<sup>15</sup> The predicate rises, through the judgment, to the status of the universal, such that: “The predicate thus constitutes the side of the determinate existence of the subject. Through this determinate universality the subject refers to the outside, is open to the influence of other things and thereby confronts them actively.”<sup>16</sup> This is the “objective sense” of judgment, which is also the epistemological sense of judgment. Such an epistemology is not empiricist epistemology but rationalist epistemology, which investigates how human cognition grasps the concept’s objective essence and universal essence: “What is there comes forth from its in-itselfness into the universal element of combination and relations, into negative references and into the interplay of actuality which is a continuation of the singular into other singulars and is, therefore, universality.”<sup>17</sup> Unlike the general variety of rationalist philosophies, the significance of Hegel’s rationalist epistemology is not presented immediately in the form of judgment, but must shine through the form so as to reflect upon and experience the content underneath it.<sup>18</sup> “What is already present in the judgment is, on the one hand, the self-subsistence but also reciprocal determinateness of the subject and predicate, and, on the other hand, their still abstract connection.”<sup>19</sup> Their true significance must still and can only be posited through reflection, but if there is no trace evidence of its content in the form, where would the reflection upon and experience of the content come from? Would it not thereby become purely subjective assumption? Hegel points out here that since contradiction is already present in the form, this incites the human being to reflect on the ground of the contradiction, or rather, the contradiction provides the thread or ground for the human being to reflect upon and experience the content:

The subject is the predicate—this is what the judgment says at first. But since the predicate is not supposed to be what the subject is, a contradiction is at hand that must resolve itself, must pass over into a result.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, a more meticulous investigation into the form of judgment (that does not stop with the investigation into the layers of words) demonstrates that form by itself is not indifferent or unrelated to its content, for it must show the relationship between the singular (or particular) and the universal. The copula “is” does not indicate indifferent equality, but differentiated identity; it indicates that a concept (noun) is both different from and essentially related to its objective actuality. Thus, even if it is considered singly with respect to form, judgment is not simply an act of thinking that concerns “correctness” but much rather concerns “truthfulness.” Judgment is an act of cognition regarding the concept’s true (objective) content. In this sense, we could say the form is “immediately presenting” (of course, not merely in the word) its content:

What comes forth from it is already present in it, and to this extent the demonstration is a display, a reflection as the positing of that which is already at hand in the extreme terms of the judgment; but even this positing is already present; it is the connection of the extremes.<sup>21</sup>

However, now that its contradiction already comes forth as “present” in the form of judgment and consequently presents its objective content as well, why would it be that general formal logic does not see this point? Why would this trace indication clearly dangling in front of the logical form itself remain undetectable? Hegel argues, this is because of formal logic’s neglect of “form” itself, which is to say, “formal logic” very much fails to value form:

However, if no thought is given to the fact that with every judgment, the positive at least, the assertion is made that the singular is universal, this happens either because no attention is given to the determinate form differentiating subject and object—for it is taken for granted that the judgment is nothing but the connecting of two concepts—or also likely because the further content of the judgment, “Gaius is learned,” or “the rose is red,” comes drifting in before the mind, and the latter, busy with the picture of Gaius etc., fails to reflect on the form.<sup>22</sup>

What formal logic values is actually “content,” however not the content of the concept or the form’s own content, but the content of “representation”; not the necessity of the concept, but the contingency of the external thing. Accordingly, formal thinking throws form as such out of the picture, or considers the form as some finite, subjective representation similar to a set of arbitrarily configured rules of play. Here, logic divorces from epistemology and separates from truth. Hegel conversely is the first to take form seriously along with the objective truth that it displays in itself. In Hegel’s theory of judgment, he divides judgment in accordance with the quality, quantity, relation and modality of actual things (corresponding to reality, relativity, necessity and the evaluative dimension) into “judgment of existence,” “judgment of

reflection,” “judgment of necessity” and “judgment of concept.” This classification already reminds us of Kant’s, but Kant only considers these forms of judgment as subjective a priori models of thinking. Kant in particular views “modality” as purely subjective evaluation, and accordingly this is where judgment tries to “step out of the sphere of judgement itself.”<sup>23</sup> Hegel not only considers these judgments as completely about objective things (of course, this only means objective concepts) in general and considers “modality” as even more objective than the other judgments in particular:

But the judgment of the concept is instead objective and, as contrasted with the others, it is the truth, for it rests on the concept precisely in its determinateness as concept, not in some external reflection or with reference to some subjective, that is, accidental, thought.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, Hegel understands the four forms of judgment as each having even more objectivity and subsuming more externality than the other preceding it, that is, as a process of knowing that continually penetrates through appearances deeper into the essence. Each kind of judgment demonstrates a stage of knowing and thus also demonstrates a level of the objective concept and of truth.

To know how to form judgments of existence, such as “the rose is red,” “the snow is white,” etc., hardly counts as a sign of great power of judgment. The judgments of reflection are more in the nature of propositions; to be sure, in the judgment of necessity the subject matter is present in its objective universality, but it is only in the judgment now to be considered that its connection with the concept is to be found.<sup>25</sup>

Visibly here, Hegel’s classification of judgments predominantly aims at showing the relationships of thinking and being, that is: being steps closer and closer to corresponding with the concept through knowing, but the precondition of doing so is that of immediately self-reflecting on the very forms of logical judgment. That is, it requires experiencing them.

However, Hegel furthermore argues that in judgment, even in the judgment of concept, although the relation of the subject matter and the concept is already revealed, since the relation of the judgment is still an immediate relation in terms of the form, even though it involves the objective content, it is still not itself this content; it is not the intrinsic essence of the objective thing, and accordingly, the judgment is still “the merely subjective element, whereas the syllogism is the truth of the judgement,” which is the rationality that is “the objective element,”<sup>26</sup> because “[e]verything is a *syllogism*, a universal that through particularity is united with [singularity].”<sup>27</sup> In other words, the judgment reflects in terms of content the relation of the subject matter and the concept, but in terms of form, the judgment is still a splitting of this relation, which always claims one stage within the subject matter or within the concept

and unites them together. The unity of the concept is only potentially playing a role in this uniting; it implicitly pushes those mutually external relations to continually adjust themselves and find a point of agreement, which forms the movement of the judgment rising up from lower to higher, but this unity still remains unactualized with regard to the whole moving process of judgment. Each judgment is grounded by another judgment, so no judgment possesses its own ground within itself and always in some respect expresses subjective judgment alone (even though it is actually part of the concept itself). Through the deduction, on the contrary, the unity of the concept is explicitly posited and recovered through the combining of the several judgments: “[t]he concept determinations no longer have, as they did in judgment, their reciprocal externality for their basis, but rather their unity.”<sup>28</sup> In this way, the deduction as an act of knowing possesses the same completely identical form as found in the objective thing itself and can express the essence of the objective thing.

So that [the concept’s] universal nature provides itself with external reality through particularity and, by this means and as negative reflection-in-itself, makes itself something individual. —Or conversely, the actual is an individual that by means of particularity elevates itself into universality and makes itself identical with itself.<sup>29</sup>

Just as in the case of judgment, Hegel divides the syllogism into four types: quality, quantity, relation and modality. It is only the fourth type (modality) that has already become “objectivity” and is no longer a mere cognition or a reflected image of objectivity. Modality shows the true meaning of “everything is a syllogism,” which is that every syllogism is actually revealing the intrinsic logic of the objective thing itself. However, the syllogism must distinctly bring this point into consciousness and undergo a process, because the syllogism still takes itself to be subjective at the very beginning. The syllogism still considers the singular, particular and universal aspects of the objective thing as externally separated from one another and externally united together by subjective thinking. Syllogizing is at the very beginning still “*only a subjective syllogising*.”<sup>30</sup> This is a “qualitative syllogism” or a “syllogism of existence (or there-ness).” Resting at this subjective and finite stage, the syllogism cannot reflect the infinite self-identical essence of the three moments of the objective thing; it is only a “formal syllogism.”<sup>31</sup> Hegel thereby analyzes from this the relational changes intrinsic to the four figures of traditional formal, while aiming at exposing the contradictory nature of the formal syllogism:

This formal syllogism is the contradiction that the middle term ought to be the determinate unity of the extremes—not, however, as this unity but as a determination qualitatively distinct from the terms whose unity it ought to be. Because the syllogism is this contradiction, it is inherently dialectical.<sup>32</sup>

However, just as he reveals how the judgment in formal logic ignores precisely the form of the judgment, Hegel also shows that the formal syllogism fails to grasp the very form of the syllogism, which is to say, the formal syllogism never grasps the form of the syllogism as concept:

The deficiency of the formal syllogism does not rest, therefore, in the form of the syllogism (which is, on the contrary, the form of rationality) but in that the form is only an abstract one, and hence void of the concept.<sup>33</sup>

This is what causes the most fundamental self-contradiction of the formal syllogism:

As such a long-drawn-out occupation with a subject matter whose single content is none other than the concept, it is itself without concept [...]

or put the other way around:

The form determinations of the syllogism are on the contrary concepts, and it is the most glaring of scandals when they are treated as a material with no concept.<sup>34</sup>

It is precisely this contradiction that makes the formal syllogism finally give away its own mechanistic, external and concept-less nature in the fourth figure after going through the three ways of combining the singular, particular and universal (three figures). It exposes the formal syllogism as being nothing more than the abstract reflection of some quantitative relation of contents, which enters us into “the reflective syllogism.”

The reflective syllogism is posited in the formal syllogism's three modes of combination, which demonstrate that every one of them presupposes the other two, and consequently the singular, particular and universal take turns filling the role of mediator, but still act as mediator in isolated and abstract fashion; the reflective syllogism then makes these mediators possess a concreteness that simultaneously reflects other things, but such concreteness as the unity of many determinations is still only an external union; it is still not the rich experience or self-reflection internal to the concrete thing itself. Thus, after the reflective syllogism breaks that abstract self-identity of the immediate formal syllogism, it also destroys the ground of conceptual unity in the syllogism, causing all sorts of maladies within itself that violate the formal rules of the syllogism. For example, “the syllogism of allness” (i.e., the deductive syllogism): “All men are mortal; Gaius is a man; therefore, Gaius is a mortal.” Hegel argues, this syllogism is only an “empty show of syllogizing,”<sup>35</sup> because even though the middle term, “man,” is a singular man, Gaius, it also possesses universality (it represents “all men”), but this reflective relation is still external (reflection in another), a quantitative consideration. Since “all men” is the sum total containing every singular man, saying

“all men are mortal” already implies and explicates the meaning of “Gaius is mortal” without having to obtain it by syllogizing first. Put the other way around, the correctness of “Gaius is mortal” is not fully guaranteed by the premise “all men are mortal,” because whether or not “all men are mortal” is itself correct rather depends on whether or not “Gaius is mortal,” for were Gaius by chance not mortal, “all men are mortal” would then be unfounded. But the syllogism of allness thinks to use “all men are mortal” to deduce the correctness of “Gaius is mortal,” which then becomes a circular argument.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, Hegel argues, the form of the “syllogism” in this syllogism of reflection is completely redundant; its value rather is still only found in explicating an immediate judgment: Gaius (like all human beings) is mortal, or: all humanity (including Gaius) is mortal: “the content of the syllogism of reflection is that the singular stands connected to its predicate immediately, not by way of an inference.”<sup>37</sup> The original aim of it had been to demonstrate an objective necessity through the syllogism, but in the end it became an assertion founded on subjective contingency. Moreover, the syllogism of allness also initially expressed the concept of “species” uniting the singular and the general in external fashion: the “human being” is at once a singular human being (Gaius) and simultaneously “all human beings,” who are all united by particularities such as “mortal” quality. Therefore, formally speaking, the particular as the middle term is no longer a quality posited separately in isolation, but is instead the concrete quality containing singular and universal in itself, such that it possesses the qualifications to act as the mediator of the two extreme terms; its deficiency is that this concrete still has not made its various determinations fully integrate together; it still has not conceptually delivered the immediate experience of the internal connection, and remains separated by the external connection of “quantitative relation” devoid of concept. It is not the true concrete concept, which leads to the collapse of the very form of the syllogism under question.

The second syllogism of reflection, “the inductive syllogism,” also runs into this problem. Here, the subject is already genus, but to correspond with this genus, the middle term goes about listing singulars one by one: “gold is a metal, silver is a metal, copper is a metal [...] they are all conductive, therefore all metals are conductive.” This leads to a contradiction. If the list is complete—that is, if it attains “complete induction”—then it is nothing but the reverse of the syllogism of allness (or the syllogism of deduction). When Hegel talks about how the correctness of the major premise in the syllogism of allness hinges upon the correctness of the conclusion, he has effectively already made this point, so he passes over the complete induction and merely points out, “in this, it in fact rather presupposes its conclusion as something immediate, just as the syllogism of allness presupposes the conclusion for one of its premises.”<sup>38</sup> But on the other hand, if the gathering together of singulars is not completed, “induction is essentially still a subjective syllogism.”<sup>39</sup> At the very most it can express a sort of contingency but cannot achieve that objective necessity that it mistakenly thought it could attain. Friedrich Engels

also confirms this insight: "Hegel's thesis [is] that the inductive conclusion is essentially a problematic one!"<sup>40</sup> Thus, if the middle term as singulars (gold, silver, etc.) never attains identity with universality, that is, with the genus (metal), "the middle term would" instead "fall apart into two disjointed parts, and there would be no inference."<sup>41</sup> In other words, the syllogism of induction still does not correspond with the nature of the syllogism. That is, it does not express the nature of objective necessity. To overcome this defect, the syllogism must make the singular and the universal in the middle term immediately identical, which is the "syllogism of analogy."

In the syllogism of analogy,

its middle term is no longer some single quality or other but a universality which is the immanent reflection of a concreated term and is therefore its nature; and conversely, since it is thus the universality of a concreated term, it is at the same time in itself this concreated term. —Here, therefore, a singular is the middle term, but a singular taken in its universal nature.<sup>42</sup>

The universal as the middle term is itself the singular, a singular that no longer finds itself connected with the universal in an external genus and is no longer forever unable to attain universality, but instead its immanent concreatedness is now understood as having a universal nature. So, it presents universality as the "immanent reflection" or the immanent experience of a concreated thing. For example, "The earth has inhabitants; the moon is an earth; therefore, the moon is inhabited." The German word for earth (*die Erde*) here of course specifically refers to the earth as this singular entity, but it also means "earth" in general, and this distinction cannot be made merely by relying on the literal value of the word; one must experience its double meaning within the noun "earth": the "earth" in "the earth has inhabitants" cannot be understood simply as a proper noun (the earth), but must instead be understood as habitable earth or as that which suits human survival: the "earth" in "the moon is an earth" should thus be understood as an earth sharing an identical nature with the earth, not as an abstract "heavenly body." Hegel argues, due to this ambiguity in the noun *die Erde*, the syllogism of analogy commits the logical error of *quaternio terminorum* in terms of form, but in terms of content, this mistake has its justifiable reason, because a noun itself is the unity of singular and general in its concreated understanding (lived experience). For example, "the middle term, 'the earth,' is taken as something concrete which, in truth, is just as much a universal nature or genus as it is a singular."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, "the quaternio terminorum would not make analogy an imperfect syllogism."<sup>44</sup> Hegel's defense of the syllogism of analogy is very interesting. Whereas the syllogism of allness (deduction) and the syllogism of induction are in effect ways of processing existing knowledge, the syllogism of analogy is an (not totally groundless) inference about the unknown that transcends current experience. To some extent, the first two syllogisms (allness, induction) have empirical inferentiality as well, but they can only



make this transcendent leap because they ultimately make use of analogy. Since so many metals are conductive, other metals should also be conductive as well. So you do not need to enumerate every last one of them. All scientific hypotheses are inseparable from the syllogism of analogy, even according to Karl Popper's requirements, and the syllogism of analogy is scientifically meaningful, because its *quaternion terminorum* leaves room for others to "falsify" it. We already know today that there are no inhabitants on the moon because the moon's "earth" does not share an identical nature with the earth. Thus, we now know more clearly what kind of earth is suitable for human survival, and we can use this new knowledge to continue analogizing what the situation is like on other planets.

The syllogism of analogy is very similar to Hegel's concept of "speculation." As mentioned earlier, "speculation" refers in Hegel to inferring what is beyond that which is immediately present, to actualizing what at first was merely subjective and turning it into objectivity. Similarly, the syllogism of analogy is an active transcendence beyond current subjective knowledge as well. Thus, "[i]t is the instinct of reason that has the presentiment that this or that empirically uncovered determination is grounded in the inner nature or the genus of an object and which is further based on this."<sup>45</sup> However, speculation also insists on the need to revert back to immanent reflection within external reflection. Although the middle term of the syllogism of analogy has the concreteness of immanent reflection, it presents different significances in the two moments it appears, so its conclusion is still external. It depends on the facts of contingent experience. Thus, in terms of form, the four terms would not make the analogy imperfect, "for although the one subject has the same universal nature as the other," whether the particular nature of one subject could be inferred in the other is undetermined, so "the externality of the unity of reflection is still there."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, although the analogy is speculative in content, it is not speculative in form. It also falls into a vicious circle, where "it presupposes its conclusion."<sup>47</sup> Zhou Liquan disagrees with Hegel's criticism regarding the syllogism of reflection (i.e., that "the premise presupposes the conclusion"). Zhou Liquan argues that this "is substantively to require the syllogism of induction and the syllogism of analogy to have that kind of necessity found uniquely in the syllogism of deduction," so this criticism is a "distortion" of both induction and analogy.<sup>48</sup> However, we can see from the previous analysis that Hegel does not "demand" that "necessity," but instead points out that they have the same imperfections as the syllogism of deduction (the syllogism of allness). Yet, on the other hand, Hegel believes that this contradiction is reasonable in terms of the content, for there is a necessity for the content in it. Additionally, Zhou blames Hegel's "basic assumption" for "the major premise of the syllogism of allness is obtained by complete induction," and argues it is "nonsense."<sup>49</sup> This accusation is unfounded too. Zhou argues that the major premise of the syllogism of allness is obtained by enumerative induction, but since the conclusion of enumeration can only be "all *b*'s are *a*" (otherwise it would have no inferential value), this conclusion is at



least still presented as the conclusion of a complete induction. The enumeration must draw a complete conclusion regardless of its own incompleteness. This is why Hegel calls it a "problematic" syllogism.<sup>50</sup>

Although the middle term or ground of the syllogism of analogy is already the concrete or the "genus," this genus is still only in immediacy, that is, an immediate premise that is presupposed, which is a subjective singular determination. It only wishes to sublimate its singularity and become objective universality, but it still has not truly detached from subjectivity and still depends on cases of external chance encounters for empirical proof. In the "syllogism of necessity," the genus has become the mediating connection: "Since the syllogism itself demands the sublation of the presupposed immediacy, the negation of singularity and hence the universal is no longer immediate but posited."<sup>51</sup> The syllogism of allness and the syllogism of induction alternatively take singularity and particularity as the universal middle term (the genus). The syllogism of analogy takes universality itself to be the middle term, but understands it as singular. When it comes to the syllogism of necessity, universality becomes the middle term completely by way of the "genus." Take for example the following syllogism: "primates are animals; humans are primates; therefore, humans are animals." This syllogism is (straightforwardly) a syllogism of necessity. Even if the middle term, "primate," is the subject of the major premise, it also indicates that it is itself genus, not the singular. Similarly, "human" (singular) and "animal" (particular) are also genera, and are both concepts of necessity posited in the universal, not singular contingent (empirical) things. From Hegel's point of view, this just shows that their connection is an objectively necessary connection, which does not depend on subjectivity and contingency, and that it is also a connection between genera. For the first time, the genus obtains its necessary ground; it is no longer immediately presupposed but "posited."

In this way, the genus becomes the objective "substance" running through all that is in the judgment of necessity, the objective substance that differentiates itself into the two extremes of the syllogism: "[t]hese have their inner identity in the middle term, whose content determinations are the form determinations of the extremes."<sup>52</sup> The form and content are united. "To this extent, therefore, the categorical syllogism is no longer subjective; in that connection of identity, objectivity begins."<sup>53</sup> For this reason, the syllogism of necessity holds the maximum value for knowing by possessing the reliability of objective necessity. However, Hegel also believes that in its first stage, that of the immediate categorical syllogism, it still has some sort of subjectivity. Namely, the identity of its content (substance) is still not present as identity of form; it is only present as different differences, and the act of "finding" this singular rather than any other singular in putting it in the connection of objective necessity is still subjective and accidental. (For example, humans and monkeys are both primates, but only "humans" are singled out here.) The second stage, the "hypothetical syllogism," overcomes this defect. In everyday conversation, when we wish to avoid subjective, arbitrary judgment

and prejudice, we often resort to the hypothetical tone to say the necessary premise, in which case, the subject matter that the syllogism concerns is in essence not the simple connection of several concrete nouns, but is instead the connection of their connection—that is, the connection between the connection of their existence in logic and the connection of their existence in actuality: If A is, so is B; but A is, therefore B is. (For example, if humans are primates, then humans are animals; now humans are primates, so humans are animals). Since the two uses of “is” (or “exists”) in the major premise find themselves in a hypothetical necessary connection, the major premise still only indicates the necessary connection of identity between them: “[i]t is not as yet said either that A is, or that B is.”<sup>54</sup> That is to say, it is not yet said whether or not A or B truly is (exists); it only evokes the hypothetical case of assuming A is (exists), in which case the true “is” is the “is” or the “being” of the connection of identity between those two “is” instances, and if we were to strictly state it, it should go as follows: “If A is, so ‘the being of B’ is; but A is; therefore, ‘the being of B’ is.” So Hegel says:

The conclusion contains the connection of subject and predicate, not as the abstract copula, but as the accomplished mediating unity. The being of the A is to be taken, therefore, not as mere immediacy but essentially as middle term of the syllogism.<sup>55</sup>

Obviously the connection here is that between three instances of “being” (“is”): (1) As the being of the necessary connection between “A is” and “B is” (major premise, universal); (2) As the being of A (minor premise, singular); (3) As the being of B (conclusion, particular). The major premise demonstrates in the form of hypothetical judgment the connection of two different instances of “is” or “being” as “the necessity or the inner substantial identity,”<sup>56</sup> making them form a concept. The being here is the being of necessity; the being of the minor premise then makes this necessity step into actuality; the conclusion as the unity of the first two “being” is objective determinate being possessing both necessity and actuality. Thus, the hypothetical syllogism presents being in the necessity of its concept, which, by the process of “becoming” and self-negation actualizes itself and becomes objective, actual being. Conversely, actual being (A is, B is) is no longer simple immediacy, but is mediated by its own necessity. “What we have here, therefore, is the identity of the mediating term and the mediated.”<sup>57</sup> The actual is by itself only the necessary, that is, the inner activity of the concept negating itself by itself, and “[t]his negativity is the mediating means, the free unity of the concept.”<sup>58</sup> This inner unity and the expressed difference, however, still constitute a contradiction:

But necessity merges with the necessary; the form-activity of translating the conditioning actuality into the conditioned is in itself the unity into which the determinacies of the oppositions previously let free into

indifferent existence are sublated, and where the difference of A and B is an empty name.<sup>59</sup>

In other words, in the hypothetical syllogism, universality as the truly actual merges singularity into itself. It is only this unity implicitly in itself, but is not yet this unity explicitly for-itself; it still has not posited singularity as totality.

In the final syllogism of necessity, that is, at the stage of “the disjunctive syllogism,” singularity elevates to complete identity with universal necessity through choice, exclusion and negation, and the last crack of form and content is smoothed out.

The mediation of the syllogism has thereby determined itself as singularity, immediacy, and self-referring negativity, or as a differentiating identity that retrieves itself into itself out of this differentiation—as absolute form, and for that very reason as objective universality, self-identical existent content.<sup>60</sup>

What the hypothetical syllogism says is: the necessary is the actual. What the disjunctive syllogism says is: the actual is the necessary. “*A* is either *B* or *D*; but *A* is *B*; therefore, *A* is neither *C* nor *D*.” Here, *A* could have (and could have only) had the three choices of being *B*, being *C* and being *D*, but it actually chose *B*, a choice that necessarily makes *A* choosing *C* and *D* no longer possible. Such necessity had already been contained in those three possibilities, and moreover, it is precisely such necessity that made one of the three possibilities become the possibility of the actual, rendering them such that if any one of them becomes actual, the others necessarily become non-actual. Consequently, the actual singular (*A* is *B*) is then something mediated by necessity, but is neither an empty difference (as in the hypothetical syllogism), nor an immediately given fact (as in the immediate syllogism): “What is posited in the disjunctive syllogism is thus the truth of the hypothetical syllogism, the unity of the mediator and the mediated [...] and for that reason the disjunctive syllogism is equally no longer a syllogism at all.”<sup>61</sup> Why is it no longer a syllogism? Because the syllogism is a syllogism for the very reason that the content of reality is still not united with the form of the concept, and we must therefore seek the union of the two through the syllogism. The internal contradiction of the syllogism consists in the non-conceptual nature or the external accidentality of that which is mediating the unity of the concept. Now, when this mediator expresses by itself the necessity of being the concept and has sublated its difference with the form of the conceptual unity, the form of the syllogism is no longer needed, for people only need to objectively describe actuality based on the actual’s immanent necessity (or immanent concept). All boils down to the consideration of the actual *A*’s inner objective necessity. There is no longer any need for other drafts of logical premises and subjective forms beforehand. The mediation itself exhibits the necessity of concept and discards the difference between it and the unified

form of concept. This form of syllogism is no longer necessary. "With this the concept in general has been realized; more precisely, it has gained the kind of reality which is *objectivity*."<sup>62</sup> From the epistemological perspective, this realization of the concept is achieved through the lived experience of returning from mediacy (mediation) back to immediacy:

The different determinations return into the latter through the mediation that unites them at first in a third term, and as a result the externality exhibits, in itself, the concept which, for its part, is no longer distinct from it as inner unity. [...] The result is therefore an *immediacy* that has emerged through the *sublation of the mediation*, a *being* which is equally identical with mediation and is the concept that has restored itself out of, and in, its otherness. This being is therefore a fact which is in and for itself—objectivity.<sup>63</sup>

Lenin, greatly appreciative of the epistemological understanding that Hegel expresses when considering logical form, states, "Hegel actually proved that logical forms and laws are not an empty shell, but are a reflection of the objective world. More correctly, he did not prove, but made a brilliant guess."<sup>64</sup> Hegel's dialectical logic aims at objectivity from the very beginning because of its own epistemological substance and realizes the transition from logical form and subjective concept to objectivity (objective concept) at the very end. What mediates this transition does so always thanks to the immediate experiential nature inherently within itself. Experience is the movement of reverting back from mediation to immediacy. Experience is not simply mediation; for, if it were, it would not be experience but instead argument. It is also not pure immediacy, however; for, if it were, it would be the passive observation of existing in-itself without the power to self-consciously undergo itself and experience itself. It is thanks to experience alone, to the self reflecting on itself in an other that allows Hegel to see the substance of the concept in objectivity and to resolutely believe that all objectivity follows in accordance with the concept. Of course, due to the basic standpoint of his idealism, this experience for Hegel is ultimately abstract, inverted, and he never sees that the objective thing only seems to correspond to the concept ultimately because the human concept is the grasp and reflection of objective, necessary laws. But, he proposes that we can only make knowledge truly advance into objectivity by way of the experience of returning from mediacy back to immediacy, which is an extremely important and most worthy thought.

Looking at it overall, Hegel's dialectical logic as the subjectivity or subjective concept of logic in a narrow sense is immediately epistemology; it is the epistemology of the laws of thinking and the laws of linguistic expression in pure logical form. Moreover, through epistemology, dialectical logic becomes identical with ontology or the objective doctrine of being. In this part we have insisted that Hegel's *Logic* is not the logic of the understanding but of reason, the logic of speculation, which is the unfolding or realization of the

concept by itself; it is a process of syllogistic reasoning that refers to objective content, so we have focused on analyzing Hegel's doctrine of the syllogism, but I believe that since I have shown previously the intrinsic connections of these two kinds of logic, I have somewhat cleared his name of the crime of "belittling" or "depreciating" formal logic. Finally, I hoped to draw attention to the unpacking and analysis of Hegel's "experiential" thought implicitly contained in his *Logic* and epistemology, which may not only be useful for unraveling many seemingly unsolvable riddles within dialectical logic (for instance, how could he still argue that the syllogism of necessity still has some epistemic value after revealing how formal logic's syllogism of necessity falls into the errors of circular argument and "four terms"?), but may also provide the premises for understanding Hegel's dialectical epistemology, which we turn to next.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel 1991, 231.
- 2 Ibid., 233.
- 3 Ibid., 236.
- 4 Hegel 2010, 529.
- 5 Ibid., 529.
- 6 Ibid., 513–14.
- 7 Ibid., 533.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid., 550.
- 10 Hegel 1991, 623.
- 11 Ibid., 551.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid., 552.
- 15 Ibid., 554.
- 16 Ibid., 544–5.
- 17 Ibid., 555.
- 18 I consider reflection and experience here as closely similar concepts, because Hegel's thought of experience is based on the reflexive form of the concept, and "reflection in itself," as immediate presentation, is given the characteristic of lived experience. Of course, there is a difference between the determinate form of reflection as concept and that of which the living process of experience consists as a concept.
- 19 Hegel 2010, 556.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., 558–9.
- 23 Hegel 1991, 658.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., 658.
- 26 Ibid., 669.

- 27 Ibid.; italics in original.
- 28 Ibid., 605.
- 29 Ibid., 254.
- 30 Ibid., 258; italics in original.
- 31 Hegel 2010, 590.
- 32 Ibid., 606.
- 33 Ibid., 606.
- 34 Ibid., 607.
- 35 Hegel 1991, 689.
- 36 Zhou 1989, 156.
- 37 Hegel 2010, 611.
- 38 Ibid., 613.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Engels 1974, para. 35.
- 41 Hegel 2010, 613.
- 42 Ibid., 614.
- 43 Ibid., 615.
- 44 Ibid., 607.
- 45 Hegel 1991, 262–3.
- 46 Hegel 2010, 616.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Zhou 1989, 157.
- 49 Zhou 1989, 156–7.
- 50 Hegel 2010, 613.
- 51 Ibid., 616.
- 52 Ibid., 617.
- 53 Ibid., 619.
- 54 Ibid., 620.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid., 621.
- 58 Ibid., 607.
- 59 Ibid., 622.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid., 623.
- 62 Ibid., 624; italics in original.
- 63 Ibid., 607.
- 64 Lenin 1976, 180.



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## Part II

# Hegel's dialectical epistemology

Hegel's dialectical epistemology is what people often designate as "dialectical reason." Of course, according to Hegel's own understanding, the dialectical method is itself, strictly speaking, the transcendence of reason, but reason must itself be dialectical at the same time, so the formulation "dialectical reason" is redundant. Hegel himself only uses this term "dialectical reason" in the sense of being the opposite of speculative (positive) reason. However, since ordinary understanding so often declares itself "reason," the formulation of dialectical reason is therefore not totally senseless when used to differentiate Hegel's concept of reason from the understanding's concept of reason; it shows the epistemological meaning of Hegel's dialectical method and the dialectical meaning of Hegel's epistemology.

The word "dialectic," as mentioned, comes from the word that only means "to converse," "to argue" in ancient Greek, and did not immediately have epistemological significance. It therefore had been seen as the study of rhetoric and sophistry. Thanks to the spirit of *logos* for having reversed language, Plato and theologians of the Middle Ages came to treat dialectic as the occupation of reason and made the first step of imbuing it with some epistemological significance, but they still only saw it as a method to be used in the act of knowing, considering it merely as one method among others (empirical, mathematical, logical), perhaps the most advanced method but still not the only method. As the method of knowing, the dialectic found itself separated from and opposed to the other methods; it could not posit itself as systematic epistemology. In Kant, dialectic is the necessary result of reason, but its meaning in epistemology is entirely negative as it is used solely for setting up boundaries for reason not to cross, so as not to do "delusional" or erroneous reasoning. It is Hegel who for the first time views dialectic as the essence of philosophical thinking or knowing. As Hegel himself puts it: "To know [*wissen*] this and to gain knowledge of objects thus characterized belongs to the essence of a philosophical consideration. This characteristic constitutes what determines itself further on as the dialectical moment of the logical."<sup>1</sup> He argues, "reason possesses no other determinations for knowing than the categories."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, these categories of thinking are by nature dialectical: "[i]t is to be regarded not as something brought to bear



on thought-determinations from outside of them, but instead as immanent in them.”<sup>3</sup> “The realization that the dialectic makes up the very nature of thinking and that as understanding it is bound to land in the negative of itself, i.e. in contradiction, constitutes a cardinal aspect of logic.”<sup>4</sup> Hegel regards the dialectic as the forms of thinking itself, and simultaneously, as the form of thinking such forms of thought:

But examining them is already itself a process of knowing. Consequently, the activity of the forms of thought and their critique must be joined in knowing. [...] They are themselves the object as well as the activity of the object.<sup>5</sup>

The examination of thinking by itself, or the thinking of thought, is not only the essence of philosophical knowing but also the essence of all scientific knowing. This is because, in his opinion, all scientific objects are thinking itself, so the dialectical nature of thinking (of categories) is the dialectical nature of philosophical knowing, and also the dialectical nature of all scientific knowing. In other words, all knowing is dialectical and can only be dialectical because the categories of thinking are not only the method and means of knowing but also the one and only true object of knowing. Therefore, “it is in general the principle of all movement, all life, and all actual activity. The dialectical is equally the soul of all truly scientific knowing.”<sup>6</sup>

In Hegel’s view, not only all scientific knowing is dialectical, but from another perspective, all dialectical progress is also of epistemological significance, so the dialectic is the theory of truth. We have pointed out in the previous part that Hegel’s dialectical logic is in itself epistemologically significant; we will also point out below that his dialectical ontology is also understood epistemologically. That is, the objective actual world is in and of itself the process of realizing the truth itself, that is, the process by which absolute spirit knows itself. But before we do, we must understand the meaning of Hegel’s dialectical epistemology or dialectical reason.

## Notes

1 Hegel 1991, 94.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 84.

4 Ibid., 39.

5 Ibid., 84.

6 Hegel 1991, 129.

## 4 The implications of dialectical reason

Hegel's epistemology is the epistemology of reason, which has two layers of implications. The first is that, in contrast to the epistemology of the sensibility or of empiricism, Hegel's epistemology is transcendent like other rationalist philosophies. What he seeks is objective necessity and essential regularity. He grounds his epistemology in reason's power of transcending empirical representations, and what he grasps is the determinate knowledge of the concept. In this respect, his epistemology is consistent with rationalist epistemology. Secondly, insofar as what knowing is for reason stands in opposition to what knowing is for the understanding in Hegel, it is dissatisfaction with the formalizing and rigidifying of the understanding. He tries to overcome the limitation of the rationalism of the understanding within the scope of reason. However, where he truly overcomes this limitation is precisely where he goes beyond the scope of rationalism in the general sense. He does not seem to have a very clear awareness of this.

We are mainly going to analyze dialectical reason's latter layer of implications in Hegel, because they are the most important and most distinctive aspects in his view. It is necessary to clarify what is implicitly in this layer to understand where Hegel goes beyond the scope of rationalism and where else he still remains limited by it.

As mentioned earlier, Hegel's concept of reason is not crafted by first liberating thought from the understanding's concept of reason and then building another from scratch, but is rather developed in the groundwork of the understanding and grew out of the understanding itself, insofar as it is nothing other than the result of revealing the internal contradiction or self-referring negativity that the understanding inherently contains in itself and adding a positive understanding to it. It is constitutive of the understanding that it does not self-consciously recognize the necessary nature of this self-referring negativity in itself while doing everything it can to eliminate it; it reduces it to error, to delusion or to the subjective overstepping of authority. The understanding does not consciously sense that its own essence is dialectical. Consequently, it always obstinately holds to the transcendence it already has over the sensuous world in cognition, but always remains unwilling to transcend over against this transcendence. Reason, however, is conscious of this

transcendence over against the transcendence and makes the understanding posit it as essential for the categories of the understanding. Since this negation of itself by itself through transcending itself is nothing other than the expression of the spirit of *nous* in Western reason, we could argue, rational knowing in Hegel is the result of rational cognition pouring the spirit of *nous* into the cognition of the understanding, or more precisely, that of explicitly giving free reign to the spirit of *nous* originally hidden within the cognition of the understanding. By bringing into play the spirit of *nous* in cognition, the categories of the understanding elevate by themselves into the dialectical categories of rational cognition. Generally speaking, when Hegel wishes to express the spirit of *logos* and wishes to express the determinacy, lawfulness and necessity of categories, he likes to use the word *rational*; when he is underscoring the negativity, movement and active development of the categories and thought along with this implicit meaning of the spirit of *nous* as inner freedom, he likes to use the word *spirit*. Therefore, Hegel often makes use of this concept of “spirit” to explain the connection between the understanding and reason:

In its truth reason is however spirit, which is higher than both reason bound to the understanding and understanding bound to reason. It is the negative, that which constitutes the quality of both the dialectical reason and the understanding: it negates the simple, thereby posits the determinate difference of the understanding; but it equally dissolves this difference, and so it is dialectical. But spirit does not stay at the nothing of this result but is in it rather equally positive. This spiritual movement, which in its simplicity gives itself its determinateness, and in this determinateness gives itself its self-equality—this movement, which is thus the immanent development of the concept, is the absolute method of the concept, the absolute method of cognition and at the same time the immanent soul of the content.—<sup>1</sup>

In actuality, all of Hegel's criticisms of the traditional faculty of understanding, for instance, that the categories of the understanding are finite, fixed, abstract and deadened, and the cognition of the understanding is subjective and external; that the understanding sees the object of cognition as the thing in-itself separate from the understanding, and so on, ultimately all such criticism boils down to saying, the understanding is not conscious of the spirit within itself and does not employ it, and this spirit possesses the very activity of *nous* and the mind, possessing not only the infinity of breaking limits but also the freedom of self-transcendence and the objectivity of externalizing itself. Hegel therefore recognizes his own task in the *Science of Logic* as “to purify these categories and in them to elevate spirit to truth and freedom.”<sup>2</sup> He argues that “[t]he concept of logic has hitherto rested on a separation, presupposed once and for all in ordinary consciousness, of the content of knowledge and its

form, or of truth and certainty.”<sup>3</sup> Hegel, however, wishes “the dead bones of logic to be quickened by spirit and become substance and content.”<sup>4</sup>

Evidently now, what is most important in Hegel’s concept of reason as an epistemological concept is that it expresses “spirit,” that is, the knowing subject’s active and free grasp of objective truth, which is active knowing as such. When Hegel’s *Science of Logic* broaches the problem of “beginning,” he proposes at the outset: the *Logic*’s need to establish by itself the beginning in itself comes from epistemological need, namely:

If earlier abstract thought is at first interested only in the principle as content, but is driven as philosophical culture advances to the other side to pay attention to the conduct of the cognitive process, then the subjective activity has also been grasped as an essential moment of objective truth, and with this there comes the need to unite the method with the content, the form with the principle. Thus the principle ought to be also the beginning, and that which has priority for thinking ought to be also the first in the process of thinking.<sup>5</sup>

Thinking, or cognition, is active, which is the precondition of understanding all active processes and also the implicit, immediate premise of examining the process of thinking as such. This why for the beginning of the *Logic*, “there is nothing that it may presuppose, [and it] must not be mediated by anything or have a ground.”<sup>6</sup> Thanks precisely to this freedom and activity of knowing, if it were to have a premise, if it were mediated by some ground, it would be limited and would cease to be free activity. Conversely, only the doing of this free activity, as the “resolve” of only what is present, “ought to be rather itself the ground of the entire science.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, it is a creative “intellectual intuition” that, if well determined beforehand, would become impossible. Hegel also criticizes Fichte’s intellectual intuition, arguing that it cannot serve as the beginning, because “anything which it says over and above simple immediacy would be something concrete, and this concrete would contain a diversity of determinations in it.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it is well determined, premised, but this only demonstrates that he thinks that the intellectual intuition is already mixed in with the manifold qualities of empirical representations and is not really pure intuition. As the last section demonstrates, Hegel is not completely negative toward intellectual intuition. In fact, Hegel himself sets the beginning of the *Logic* as a pure super-sensuous intuition: “Because it is the beginning, its content is an immediate. But first of all it is not an immediate of sense-intuition or of representation, but of thought, which because of its immediacy can also be called a supersensuous, inner intuiting.”<sup>9</sup> “[I]t is the process of eternally intuiting [*anschauen*] itself in the other.”<sup>10</sup> Hegel is clearly avoiding the terminological distortions of Fichte and Schelling, but this does not change the substance of the problem: This “inner intuiting” or “eternally intuiting” is nothing but the intellectual intuition of the understanding that

Kant so resolutely excludes from the powers of human cognition. So Hegel argues, “[a] beginning which is in itself a concrete totality may as such also be free and its immediacy have the determination of an external existence.”<sup>11</sup> But this point cannot be derived by analysis of beginning with the abstract concept of “being,” or rather, we can only reach concrete immediacy through mediation by viewing the beginning as the end to be realized, as a movement back into self. As he says elsewhere: “But this unity of intelligence and intuition, of the inwardness of Spirit and its relation to externality, must be, not the beginning, but the goal, not an immediate, but a resultant unity.”<sup>12</sup> The beginning of freedom does not just mean already being free at the beginning, for it requires having “lived through” (*erleben*) the beginning unfolding itself into the whole system, only living through which can the “experience” (*Erlebnis*) of freedom be gained. Precisely speaking, such “living through” is itself “experience,” because freedom is the very pursuit of freedom and the very experience of freedom, that is, the concrete and rich sense of freedom in free movement. In this sense, this experience of intuition may “have the determination of an external existence,” because it is nothing other than the movement of externalization as such.

Such freedom without either determinateness or precondition is again recovered at the end of the *Logic's* conclusion on a higher level. Since freedom of cognition experiences its own nature in the course of pursuing freedom, it has to self-consciously (methodically) realize this nature of itself, but because this self-conscious realization is still free and indeterminate (infinite), the method reverts back to its beginning, “in such a way that it does not merely restore that beginning, albeit as determinate, but that the result is equally the sublated determinateness, and hence also the restoration of the first immediacy in which it began.”<sup>13</sup> In this way, the *Logic* reaches the “highest and most intense point,” “pure personality,” that is, (expressed in terms of the attributes of God) absolutely active thinking, which, “solely by virtue of the absolute dialectic” that “is its nature,” “equally embraces and holds everything within itself, for it makes itself into the supremely free—the simplicity which is the first immediacy and universality.”<sup>14</sup> This is what Hegel calls “the Idea of absolute cognition,” which as such is subjectivity, but also “the impulse to sublate it. In other words, it is absolute liberation or ‘freedom’ (*Befreiung*).”<sup>15</sup> Clearly, the simplicity or indeterminateness of the spirit of *nous*, its unlimited form and self-determining form, is thus its immediate and unconditioned free creation, which is the most important point to understand in Hegel’s dialectical epistemology.

This also touches on a frequently perplexing problem in Hegel’s dialectic, which is that of the dialectic’s relation to mysticism. What Hegel calls “supersensuous inner intuiting” obviously holds itself some tendency of mysticism, which is based on the ineffable and inexpressible immediate experience of the inner mind. The question is, which sort of mysticism this is? Since the time of ancient Greece, there have been many kinds of mysticism in the history of Western philosophy. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato mentions that in

addition to the madness that comes along with love, there are four divisions of madness inspired by attachment to gods, including prophecy, the mystic madness, the poetic (i.e., inspiration), and that afflicting reason (i.e., reflection and memory). The negative angle of what Hegel means by “madness” here is losing sobriety of consciousness, the inability to determine and control by rational mediation, but from the positive angle it is an impulse inside of the mind to act, a desire or yearning, a passion welling up from god knows where: mad love from the gods Eros and Aphrodite, prophetic madness from the god Apollo, poetic madness from the Muses and so on. All of them well up inside and attached to the human body. Among them, madness of reason, everyone agrees in *Phaedrus*, is by far the best:

Someone afflicted with this madness, upon seeing the beauty of the mundane world, recollects the true beauty of the world above, feels his wings growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so, and, like a bird, gazes upward and neglects the things below, So it was called madness [...] Among all divine supports, this one is the best.<sup>16</sup>

Such madness of reason is only achievable by the few, the philosophers, and only after a long period of training:

Few then are left which retain an adequate recollection of them; but these when they see here any likeness of the things of that other world, are stricken with amazement and can no longer control themselves; but they do not understand their condition, because they do not clearly perceive.<sup>17</sup>

The mysticism of Plato’s conception of madness is then further developed in the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, in the pantheist doctrine of “emanation” and the thought of the “mind’s eye” concentrating the Aether. However, when this mysticism entered Christian orthodoxy through Augustine, it changed somewhat: the gods of Platonism were such that only rare philosophical genius could occasionally see them after a long period of training, so even though “madness” is experienced in the psyche as immediate impulse or intuition, it is imagined in reason as mediated, where someone experiencing madness “feels wings growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so,” and thus cannot truly reach the divine, because “they do not clearly perceive.” Conversely, the Christian god is one whom every ordinary person, even criminals, can feel and reach as long as they are willing; it depends on the human will, not only human faculties or genius; it is only that this manner of feeling is mystical and irrational. But such mystical, immediate feelings is a far cry from the intoxicated madness of a mental obsession with the gods that transcends reason; it is instead the upholding of faith in full sobriety under the control of reason, a conscious absurdism. As Tertullian put it, “I believe it because it’s absurd.” In other words, Christian mysticism is experienced in the psyche as mediated (because faith is nothing but the attitude of accepting

the unknowable transcendent object of the world beyond), but it is imagined by reason as immediate, as the human mind immediately communicating and merging with a transcendent God (the Holy Spirit). For Hegel, faith is how whatever is unified, how whichever antinomy that is unified is present in our imagination.<sup>18</sup> Christian “love” is no longer frantic and impulsive, but rather is pious and peaceful, broadening and gentle. There is certainly no lack of religious fanaticism and destructive acts in the history of Christianity, but this is rejected by the doctrine itself.

It is now a matter of public recognition that Hegel first stepped into dialectical thinking from the perspective of critical religion (e.g., Christianity) and moral philosophy (e.g., Kant). Bernhard Lypp’s view is that Hegel first digested the concept of freedom in his early critique of Kant, in the process of which he developed the first forms of the dialectical concept even before his philosophical theory truly took shape.<sup>19</sup> Fulda points out that Hegel’s entire philosophy first developed out of a theological background, insisting there is no way to enter Hegel’s theory of absolute spirit without considering the theological context in which it developed.<sup>20</sup> In effect, long before his time in Frankfurt while at Berne, Hegel already began showing deviations from Kant’s formalism and Kant’s ethics based on the understanding in *Folk Religion and Christianity*, where he divides religion into “objective religion” and “subjective religion,” considering the former to be a component of the latter.<sup>21</sup> The seed of subjective religion is feeling that is in the heart (*Herzen*). In his view, Kant’s deduction of religion actually reduces it to a constitutive element of this seed, to the clear concept,<sup>22</sup> but neglects the condition of a different disposition (*Gemüt*).<sup>23</sup> Kant ignores the “moral feeling” in the human heart, attaching more importance to understanding and memory. However, Hegel writes:

religion is a matter of the heart, which often deals inconsistently with the dogmas congenial to understanding and memory. Surely the worthiest people are not always those who have done the most speculating about religion, who are given to transforming their religion into theology, and who are in the habit of replacing the fullness and warmth of faith with cold cognitions and deft displays of verbal dexterity. Religion in fact acquires very little through the understanding, whose operations and skeptical tendencies are more likely to chill than warm the heart.<sup>24</sup>

We can see from here the impact of early Romanticism and the rise of the proto-Romantic “Storm and Stress” (*Sturm und Drang*) movement in Germany in the late eighteenth century, and the tide of this age waxed in resistance to religious rule, expressing the sublation of the Enlightenment’s intellectualism. In the very same article, Hegel also states:

Wisdom is something quite different from enlightenment, from ratiocination. But wisdom is not science. Wisdom is the soul’s elevation, through



experience deepened by reflection, over its dependence on opinion and the impressions of sense. And if it is to be practical and not merely a complacent and boastful intellectualism, wisdom must be attended by the steady warmth of a gentle flame.<sup>25</sup>

In *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, which Hegel wrote during his time at Frankfurt, he uses the word “love” to express the union of opposites. Many people have already pointed out that what Hegel presents as “love” during this period later becomes what Hegel calls “reason.” At the same time, another important concept that Hegel presents is that of “life,” which many people agree is what he later termed “spirit.” But what connects life and spirit to love and reason? In my opinion, “life” for Hegel is tantamount to negative reason in later writings, while love stands roughly for positive reason. Both negative reason and positive reason fall under “rational intuition” and constitute the two sides of intuitive experience; life advances from immediacy to mediacy, and love then returns to immediacy. But overall, they are both immediate experience, sensuous expressions of Hegel’s concept of reason, which exposes the root of intuition hidden underneath Hegel’s rationalism:

Opposition is the possibility of reunification, and the extent to which in affliction life is felt as an opposite is also the extent of the possibility of resuming it again. It is in the fact that even the enemy is felt as life that there lies the possibility of reconciling fate [...] This sensing of life, a sensing which finds itself again, is love, and in Love fate is reconciled.<sup>26</sup>

Life that is reconciled by love is therefore “infinite” life, which is certainly understandable as what “spirit” means, because it represents the inner impulse and negative spirit of *nous* in the mind; but love as the universal *logos* still does not have the implication of conceptual universality at this point in time. Rather, love is only understood as that *logos* (*dao* 道) of the Christian God:

[Love] is no universal opposed to a particular, no unity of the concept, but a unity of spirit, divinity. To love God is to feel one’s self in the “all” of life, with no restrictions, in the infinite. In this feeling of harmony there is no universality, since in a harmony the particular is not in discord but in concord, or otherwise there would be no harmony.<sup>27</sup>

This opposition of love and the concept turns it into something “finite,” that is, intuition and representation, such that love must be united with “reflection” for true religion to take shape.<sup>28</sup> Love is the Holy Spirit, the universal spirit. Love is *nous*. Still not equal to the concept of reason that would soon develop, it expresses rational intuition, not at the level of the conceptual but at that of the sensuous, the passionate. Hegel’s love shares much with Schelling’s intellectual intuition:



## I

This genuine love excludes all oppositions. It is not the understanding, whose relations always leave the manifold of related terms as a manifold and whose unity is always a unity of opposites [left as opposites]. It is not reason either, because reason sharply opposes its determining power to what is determined. [...] It is a feeling, yet not a single feeling [among other single feelings]. A single feeling is only a part and not the whole of life [...] Love is a sensing of something living.<sup>29</sup>

Yet every reflection annuls love.<sup>30</sup>

Hegel's "love" proves originally to be a religious concept, which had meant to be used for overcoming the finitude of Kant's understanding and the antinomies of reason. Setting out with the experience of oneself living, it is the intuitive take on life, but there is still an unexplainable mystical nature to it at this point. Hegel reduces this mystery to the religious miracle:

Miracles therefore are the manifestation of the most *undivine*, because they are the most unnatural of phenomena. They contain the harshest opposition between spirit and body, two downright opposites here conjoined without any mitigation of their prodigiously harsh contradiction. Divine action is the restoration and manifestation of oneness; miracle is the supreme disavowance.<sup>31</sup>

The objective aspect of God, his configuration, is objective only in so far as it is simply the presentation of the love uniting the group, simply the pure counterpart of that love, and it contains nothing not already in love itself (though here it appears as love's counterpart), contains nothing which is not at the same time feeling.<sup>32</sup>

However, Hegel's view of religious miracles is intensely colored by heretical mysticism, insofar as Christian orthodoxy rejects immediate experience of life, and advocates instead (as mentioned earlier) on behalf of love as a belief, as a mediated affirmation, where the intellect alone determines this belief or love as immediate. So Hegel calls this orthodox dogma "objective religion" or "positive religion," while Hegel himself advocates for the establishment of "subjective religion" based on lived experience. In this regard, his thought turned to ancient Greek pagan culture, that is, Plato's theory of madness, and he even quotes a paragraph from the *Phaedrus* about "the madness of love" or "madness of intellect" (Plato often treats the two as the same) to illustrate his point.<sup>33</sup> But unlike Plato, he still retains and uses the Christian doctrine of the immediate spiritual identity of God and humanity. Therefore, Hegel not only determines the immediate experience of life as the ground of religion, but must also expand this personal experience of Christian love into the intuition of God's essence. In this way, Hegel enables religion to return back to immediacy with respect to both personal experience and intellectual reflection,

which brings along with it the mystery or inherent contradiction contained within “love” itself. At the very end, Hegel had no choice but to resort to “religious miracle,” while indicating that he is conscious of this contradiction and that “love” as intuition is finite (not finite in essence, but in expression, namely it is unspeakable), but he could not find a way to overcome this finitude in his early works.

The concepts of “love” and “life” posited by absorbing Plato’s conception of madness and Christian spiritual faith are not abandoned in Hegel’s later thought, but instead find renewing interpretations at a higher level. In the *Logic*, “life” is regarded as the inner motivation and soul of the concept which we have already underscored well enough. The key is the understanding of “love.” In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the final concluding criticism of “Revealed Religion” before transitioning to “Absolute Knowing” reveals the limitations of “love.” He believes that revealed religion (Christianity),

achieves satisfaction as a result of externally adding to its pure negativity the positive meaning of the unity of itself with essence; its satisfaction thus itself remains burdened with the opposition of an other-worldly beyond. [...] Just as the singularly individual divine man has a father existing-in-itself and only an actual mother, so too the universal divine man, the religious community, has as its father its own doing and knowing, but for its mother it has eternal love, which it only feels but does not intuit in its consciousness as an actual immediate object. Its reconciliation consequently is in its heart, but it is still estranged from its consciousness, and its actuality is still fractured [...] and it is indeed known of that essence that it no longer cognizes the object as self-alienated, but cognizes it as the same as itself in its love. However, for self-consciousness, this immediate present does not yet have spiritual shape.<sup>34</sup>

This nearly amounts to a self-criticism of his Frankfurt-era thought. After all, Christian love can only intellectually conceive the immediate identity of the individual and the sacred object (God), but cannot intuit God as actual immediate object within its consciousness. In love, consciousness is only externally adding its positive sense to its negativity, but cannot truly eliminate the opposition of the finite human being and infinite, transcendent God. If love wishes to realize the unity that religion idealizes, it must ask “conceptual understanding” for help and sublimate the finitude of its representation and the externality of the actual. For this reason, Hegel revives the ancient tradition of *logos*, and unifies the certainty of science and the understandability of expression with love and the inner impulse of life within the concept, by which means he posits his *Logic* and system of absolute knowledge. On this basis, when he returns to love and the impulse of life, there is a different significance at the logical stage. In the *Science of Logic*, he argues the concept is “free power,” and “[i]t could also be called free love and boundless blessedness, for it relates to that which is distinct from it as to itself; in it, it has returned to

itself.”<sup>35</sup> In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*, he considers the concept as the liberation of thought, as “feeling ‘love’, as enjoyment ‘blessedness.’”<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, the mysticism of “love,” especially the mystical experience of life, is never completely eliminated in his *Logic*, but Hegel no longer regards it as a “religious miracle.” Hegel publicly acknowledges in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*:

As regards the significance of the speculative, it bears mentioning here that the same thing is to be understood by it as formerly used to be called the mystical, especially when referring to religious consciousness and its content. When one speaks of the mystical today, it is normally taken to be synonymous with the mysterious and the incomprehensible, and the mysterious and incomprehensible are then—depending on the respective educational background and mindset—regarded by some as something genuine and true, but by others as belonging to superstition and deception. In this regard, it should be noted first that the mystical is indeed something mysterious, but only for the understanding, simply because abstract identity is the that, as far as they are concerned, [...] whereas the mystical (taken as synonymous with the speculative) is the concrete unity of those determinations that count as true for the understanding only in their separation and opposition. to the contrary, it turns out to be constantly subsuming itself and changing over into its opposite, whereas the rational as such consists precisely in containing the opposites as ideal moments within itself. Thus, everything rational is to be called at the same time “mystical,” by which, however, nothing more or less is said than that it goes beyond the understanding and in no way that it is to be regarded generally as inaccessible to thinking and as incomprehensible.<sup>37</sup>

In Hegel’s view, even though speculation or reason is posited as something mysterious from the perspective of the inner understanding of concepts, it is not incomprehensible and ungraspable, but is still fundamentally bound to Christian mysticism:

In the Christian religion too the dogmas are called “mysteries,” a term referring to what in the Christian religion is known about the nature of God. So they are not something unknown but instead something revealed, something well known. In this case “mystery” is by no means something secret, for Christians are those who are insiders to the mystery. It is known to all the members, and this is what distinguishes Christianity from the other religions. The “secret” is then the speculative element, wherein one does not stop short with the standpoint of the senses.<sup>38</sup>

However, in the two passages above, Hegel seems intentionally confusing. In order to speak of *Mystische* as acceptable to thinking and *begreifen* (i.e.,

conceptually understanding), he resorts to the analogy that “all believers are the ones who know” what the religious mystery is, but the believers “do not know” the mystery by way of the concept, for if they did, it would not be mysterious. Every religious mystery is mysterious not necessarily because it is unknown or because nobody knows what it is, but because it is at least ungraspable and unspeakable by way of conceptual thinking, that is, because it must rely on immediate experience and intuition of the inner mind. Hegel, however, presents himself with a difficult problem. He wants to keep the mystery of speculative reason, in order to transcend limitation of separating objects by way of intellectual thought because the latter cannot therefore unite the opposite sides of the contradiction. However, he also wants to incorporate this mystery into the framework of conceptual thinking and the logical expression of language in order to avoid the intuitive representations and inner experiences that he so despises (such as Schelling’s “intellectual intuition”). It should be acknowledged that he solves this problem quite successfully through the “familiarization” of logical language and the suggestive expressivity it brings about. But the ground of such expression (and its acceptability and interpretation) is not the concept itself, but rather the inner experience of the concept whose premise is the colorful spectrum of the human being’s emotional life and living. This is what Hegel himself fails to notice. In this regard, he is still constrained by traditional rationalism. The neo-Hegelians strongly bring into play this hidden aspect of Hegel’s thought. Josiah Royce is right to argue that Hegel’s dialectical logic is that logic of emotion which applies to the most strongly theoretical and most emotionless human concepts.<sup>39</sup> Although this exercise is one-sided, it is indeed rooted in Hegel’s thought.

So when Hegel says of philosophy and religion that “both have the truth for their object,”<sup>40</sup> we should understand that his epistemology (philosophical) and mysticism (religious) had been inextricably bound together all along. We could analyze and evaluate many thoughts within Hegel’s epistemology, such as the illusoriness of the sensuous, the division of knowledge and reason, the logical development of the knowing, the relation of knowledge to practice, and the good, but if we do not take the mysticism of his epistemology seriously, if we neglect how he combines immediacy and mediacy and shy away from diving deeper into the spirit of *nous* implicitly thinking in this mysticism, and consequently, never penetrate the whole of his epistemology, we will not only fail to understand Hegel’s dialectical epistemology. We will also fail to explain how dialectical reason can mediate dialectical logic and dialectical ontology. Hegel’s dialectical reason differs fundamentally from what reason and the understanding mean in the average sense of those terms, insofar as it includes lived experience and the conceptual mysticism that characterizes it. This is where Hegel escapes the bondage of rationalism and breaks into modern irrationalism. Jean André Wahl points out:

There is a moment in the course of the history of philosophy when philosophy seems to abandon the search for one of the elements which had

till then constituted its essence. This is the moment when Hegel replaces the idea of permanence by that of universal movement. But Hegel retains the ideas of objectivity, necessity, universality, and totality of the classical philosophers; the only fundamental idea he dismisses is that of permanence.<sup>41</sup>

Hegel does have a “talent” for experiencing the movement of life, and a true philosophical talent it is, but it is also a spiritual and poetic gift, without which it would have simply been impossible to have experienced the necessary progression within the logical concept and to have written out this great work the *Science of Logic*. Without such a gift, even reading the *Science of Logic* could prove too difficult, for it is indeed a logical poem, an epic poem of history.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel 2010, 10.
- 2 Ibid., 17.
- 3 Ibid., 24.
- 4 Ibid., 32.
- 5 Ibid., 46.
- 6 Ibid., 49.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., 55.
- 9 Ibid., 738.
- 10 Hegel 1991, 286.
- 11 Hegel 2010, 740.
- 12 Hegel 1970, 9.
- 13 Hegel 2010, 749.
- 14 Ibid., 750.
- 15 Ibid., 752.
- 16 Plato 1914, 116–18, 124–5.
- 17 Plato 1925, 250a.
- 18 Hegel 1988, 447.
- 19 Horstmann 1978, 296–7.
- 20 Fulda 1978, 21.
- 21 Hegel 1948, 8.
- 22 Ibid., 9.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Hegel 1984, para. 14.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Hegel 1948, 232.
- 27 Ibid., 247.
- 28 Hegel states, “What is religious [...] is reflection and love united, bound together in thought (Hegel 1948, 253).
- 29 Ibid., 304–5.
- 30 Ibid., 253.
- 31 Ibid., 297; italics in original.

- 32 Ibid., 292–3.
- 33 Ibid., 270.
- 34 Hegel 2018, 452–3.
- 35 Hegel 2010, 532.
- 36 Hegel 1991, 232.
- 37 Ibid., 133.
- 38 Hegel 2006, 86.
- 39 Royce 1982, 121.
- 40 Hegel 1991, 28.
- 41 Wahl 2019, 13.

## 5 The dialectical development of knowing

The identity of thinking and being thereby attained, that is, when all being is thinking, thinking is fully capable of grasping being to the point where thinking necessarily produces being.

After clarifying the foundational concept of Hegel's epistemology—namely, that of dialectical “reason”—we can examine his dialectical conception of knowing. Knowing itself is, in his opinion, a living movement and development. In the broad sense, all of his *Logic* demonstrates this process. But in the narrower sense, he examines this process in the third part, the “Doctrine of Concept,” namely, “the Idea.” He divides the process into three moments: (1) individual “life” as the internal impulse or impetus of this process; (2) the pursuit of “truth”: from analysis to synthesis, from abstract to concrete development; (3) Practice and “the good,” or the transition to the “Absolute Idea.”

### Life

As mentioned earlier, life proves most important during Hegel's Frankfurt period of conceptual thought, where he presents it mainly in the context of Christian asceticism and Kant's abstract ethical formalism, which reflects the impact of Romanticism upon Hegel. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he regards “life” as the first subject matter with which self-consciousness makes contact.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, life becomes the second moment following “self-consciousness.” However, in the *Science of Logic*, “life” is the first category, the first Idea at the stage of the Idea in the logical development, where it is no longer the object but the subject, the inner motivating force of all knowing, the premise of all knowing as such. While hanging on this premise, Hegel is not simply referring to life as the biological premise of human cognition, but to life as an active process of cognizing, a process that is fully alive and developing from internal contradiction and negating itself by itself. Here, although Hegel speaks of sensuous experience, responsivity, reproduction, breeds and so on, this is mainly for the sake of illustrating the deeply hidden source of motivation for knowing in general (in the Idea) and in individual cognition in particular. We all ordinarily say, human thinking is no mirroring

or passive reflecting of Nature, but is instead active; it is actively grasping Nature, but very few have ventured as deeply as Hegel into the matter of thinking as the internally driven act of living. Without this vital impulse that drives life, all explanations of the activity of thinking amount to nothing but abstract, groundless words. Put otherwise, life is *not* simply “being” as the premise of knowing (i.e., when we say that the human being can only think when the condition of living is met, there is no thought without body, etc.), but should also be seen as the ground of knowing’s essence. Knowing and thinking are in essence expressions of living. Knowing is the process of unifying subjective and objective, and of unifying idea with reality, but at the very beginning it is initially the process of unifying the soul and flesh of life (the mind–body connection).

So what Hegel is talking about here is not “natural life” (natural philosophy) or “mental life” (phenomenology of spirit), but logical life—life as “immediate Idea”—which develops on conceptual grounds as the unity of two moments, namely “subjective concept” and “objectivity.”

The concept that came on the scene earlier as a subjective concept is the soul of life itself; it is the impulse that gives itself reality through a process of objectification [...] [I]n the idea of life the moments of life’s reality do not receive the shape of external actuality but remain enveloped in conceptual form.<sup>2</sup>

It is both subjective and objective, so it “is in and for itself absolute universality.”<sup>3</sup> When the concept realizes itself (through deduction) in the whole objective world, it presents the omnipresence of the life of the concept; this then becomes “an incomprehensible mystery” for the understanding that is not conscious of the identity of concept and reality.<sup>4</sup> But the identity of concept and reality is only graspable through this active movement of life’s “negative unity.” It shows that the life of the concept is the active essence or “soul” of objective reality: “But as subjective substance it is impulse, more precisely the specific impulse of particular difference, and no less essentially the one and universal impulse of the specific that leads its particularization back to unity and holds it there.”<sup>5</sup> Hegel’s inclusion of the category of “life” into the discussion of truth and epistemology is irreproachable, and even “genius”<sup>6</sup> in Lenin’s words, but he figured that it would be enough to speak of “life” as logical Idea or concept to eliminate the “baffling mystery” (*das unbegreifliche Geheimnis*) that comes along with it, which shows the ridiculous aspect of his rationalism, because this not only fails to eliminate the non-conceptual nature of life, it also drags his concepts into the sphere of the irrational. The sensibility, representations and intuitive experience—all consistently barred from entry by Hegel himself—just fly back in through the window in disguise. He effectively already broke out of the narrow-mindedness of rationalism, just to stop himself to rest in the kingdom of shadows where he had become so accustomed to staying.



It is precisely this contradiction between the transcendence of living over the concept along with the procrustean bed of Hegel's concept disfiguring life that brings about what Lenin calls Hegel's "conceptual play with organism." The sensuous characteristics of life that he is describing here have very little to do with the "Idea" in fact, and instead express more Romanticist and even modern existentialist thought. For instance, he determines the universality of the "living individual" as "the purely internal pulsating of living reality."<sup>7</sup> "Sensitivity" is "the singular external determinateness, the so-called impression, [which] goes back from its external and manifold determination into this simplicity of self-feeling."<sup>8</sup> This negation of the self by itself, which is sealed off inside of self-feeling, does not find contentment within such immanence, for it has to express itself as responsivity or irritability, reveal itself in particular impulses and enter into a relationship with the environment and with actual things as a self-unified individual (singularity), where it expresses itself as the process of living. "This process begins with need."<sup>9</sup> Life needs grounding in self-preserving instinct. In order to sustain itself, "the living being is thereby the impulse to posit as its own this world which is other than it, to posit itself as equal to it, to sublimate the world and objectify itself."<sup>10</sup> To maintain identity with itself through the externalization and objectification of itself, this is the absolute contradiction of life:

The living being is for itself this rupture, has the feeling of this contradiction which is pain. Pain is therefore the prerogative of living natures. It is said that contradiction cannot be thought; but in the pain of the living being it is even an actual, concrete existence.<sup>11</sup>

It seems Hegel does not realize that when he explains the contradictory concept in the *Logic* through the example of the living and the instance of pain, he effectively already says the unity of contradiction or opposites only becomes fully understandable when reflecting on immediate lived experience, but he clearly notices that the problem of contradiction and its identity is not a purely theoretical one, but is instead a practical one involving need, impulse, action, value and having purpose. It is consequently also a problem that goes beyond the abstraction of the individual's intrinsic being and involves the relation with another living individual, that is, with the genus. The individual's sensuous activities are genus activities: "Now because the relation of genus is the identity of individual self-feeling in such a one who is at the same time another self-subsistent individual, it is a contradiction; accordingly, the living being is once more impulse."<sup>12</sup> It would seem that we could count on Hegel to provide us, or at least imply for us the genealogy of human knowing here, that is, the history of how knowing comes-into-being from the human being's sensuous species activity and from the act of practicing, but disappointingly, what he calls "genus activity" is only the act of species reproduction undertaken through the relating of the sexes. Of course, living is intimately tied to the act of reproducing. As internal

“impulse” (*Trieb*, or in Sigmund Freud’s terminology, “drive”), it is indeed an important primary motivation of the human being’s mental activity. However, merely the need to reproduce alone does not provide us with an adequate understanding of the emergence of human mental life (including knowing). Hegel’s transition from life and genus to the “idea of cognition” is a completely far-fetched analogy, an empty leap. He only says the prolongation of the genus sublates individual life: “the death of this life is the coming to be of spirit.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, the individual recovers its universality in the genus and becomes “explicit.” “Thus it is the idea that relates itself to itself as idea, the universal that has universality for its determinateness and existence. This is the idea of cognition.”<sup>14</sup> However, why cannot the animal “genus” attain cognition for-itself and rise up to spirit? Even the animal sacrifices its own individuals to sustain the genus. The answer always remains a mystery in Hegel. We would have to wait for Karl Marx’s critique of estranged labor in *Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* in order to finally track down the answer: humankind treats immediate sensuous life activity as the means of a mediated life, while the animal is immediately identical with sensuous life activity.<sup>15</sup> This ambiguity in Hegel shows that he is unwilling to get his hands dirty in the concrete investigation of the human being’s sensuous life activities and too eagerly raises the discourse into the ideal kingdom of one-sided, abstract forms of cognition. For example, it is enough to simply compare such accounts of his with corresponding passages about “life” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (pp. 105–13), to show that he is taking a major step backward in concreteness of argument. What he finds bearable when discussing “the empirical science of consciousness” becomes unbearable when discussing a form of the “Idea.”

That being said, through his analysis of “life,” Hegel after all does demonstrate that (1) life is the immediate premise of all Ideas and mental activity and the inner soul of the concept; (2) knowing is not merely the life impulse of an individual, but is also a universal doing of the genus; it is the act of the genus becoming conscious of itself. In other words, knowing is an activity of spirit with not only universality and infinity but also sociality.

## Truth

Life is still the Idea implicitly existing in-itself. The idea of cognition, whose object is itself, becomes explicit for-itself and reaches the self-conscious idea. Hegel argues only the latter qualifies as “spirit,” but he insists “spirit is here considered in the form that pertains to this idea as logical.”<sup>16</sup> In addition to this logical form, spirit also comes in inferior forms, such as soul, consciousness, and spirit as appearance (mental phenomena), where he (not accidentally) mentions Plato’s doctrine of madness and other such irrational but more advanced activity of spirit.<sup>17</sup> But he claims that the “Idea” of spirit is the subject matter of the science of pure logic, which has already transcended spirit in psychology, anthropology and phenomenology

of spirit. When in the name of "subjectivity" spirit goes and opposes itself to the "object" in search of truth, it is knowing as such, the theoretical idea or the "Idea of truth."

Hegel insists that the Idea of truth is a process of knowing in the strictest sense, a process whose premise is the opposition of the subjective and objective, and which is by itself the act of sublating this opposition, or more precisely, it is the act of the subjective concept sublating itself and realizing its own subjectivity as objectivity. The purpose of the action is to make objectivity identical with the concept, and this contradiction of identical and not identical is the internal contradiction of the concept itself (because his "objectivity" is not that which is indifferent to the concept, but is instead posited through the syllogism by the concept, that is, the "difference of the concept"). Thus, the concept does not need the third term as intermediary, for it can solve this contradiction for itself, but at the beginning of this process, the action of the concept is still only a purely abstract "impulse." The inner activity that bursts out from the Idea of life presents the impulse of truth in the field of universal spirit. "Consequently this impulse is the impulse of truth in so far as the truth is in cognition, and therefore of truth in its strict sense as theoretical idea."<sup>18</sup> This impulse of Truth expresses the continual advance from abstract to concrete in the cognition process as it develops further: "The specific nature of this impulse is therefore to sublimate its own subjectivity, to make that first abstract reality a concrete one, filling it with the content of the world presupposed by its subjectivity."<sup>19</sup> There are two implications immediately visible here: one is that the concept by which the impulse of cognition initially bursts forth is still subjective and abstract. For instance, the concept of "being" is still impossible to understand with respect to every moment of its rich content and potential when it first emerges, so it is just an empty concept that will have to rely on a noun that is subjectively posited for it to be brought into the beginning of the *Logic* as the first category; but this defect is at the same time the subjective skew that makes it incline as inner impulse in the direction of self-realization and self-enrichment, that is, in the direction of self-demonstrating all of the intended content inside of itself, and this is precisely what pushes it from abstraction into concreteness. The other implication is understandable in the following way: namely, the process of the concept's realization is at first nothing but a pure and simple impulse that moves with little more than the abstract purposiveness of "striving for Truth"; it still lacks all concrete determination of "truth" or self-determination (otherwise, it would have already been well determined beforehand and passively compelled, but would not become the impulse that it is), so the concept stops still at the abstractness and subjectivity of the impulse itself; but as the impulse results in something and yields a conclusion with objectivity, it no longer remains pure impulse to objectivity, for it has become the synthesis of this preexisting objectivity, and in this sense, cognition's advance from abstract to concrete is that from analysis to synthesis. In other words, the abstractness of the beginning is not only in the abstractness of the concept found in the beginning, but is more

importantly the abstractness of the beginning itself as impulse to know the truth (resolve).<sup>20</sup>

In Hegel's view, this impulse to know is the concept's own impulse. The only problem is that it still is not the object as it is "found" at the beginning, but is rather the subject:

We must examine cognition, therefore, in its positive activity within it. Because this idea, as we have shown, is the concept's impulse to realize itself for itself, its activity consists in determining the object, and by virtue of this determining to refer itself to itself in it as identical.<sup>21</sup>

The impulse to know is thus an impulse aiming at the object, so that it "claims" the object, which is the immediate conveyance and irresistible expansion of the object. However, since it is only an impulse, it is only an abstract negation in itself without any content brought to it by itself. "This cognition does not in any way appear as an application of logical determinations."<sup>22</sup> So at the beginning, its attitude is to passively accept and its activity merely presents itself as a tendency to positively determine the present object, but this determination is apparently the intrinsic relation preexisting in the subject matter itself that just happens to be "found" by the subject and nothing more. Therefore, the subjectivity of cognition presents itself at the very beginning as this subjectivity's negation of itself by itself: "And its activity appears restricted simply to the removing from the subject matter of a subjective obstacle, an external veil. This cognition is analytic cognition."<sup>23</sup>

In analytic cognition, the subject obtains its own content by negating itself, but still sees this content as the objective subject matter external to itself:

Since it is the first premise of the whole syllogism, mediation does not as yet belong to it; analytic cognition is rather the immediate communication of the concept, a communication that does not as yet contain otherness and in which activity divests itself of its negativity.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the subject of the concept negating itself is simultaneously the determination of the object, which is the self-cancellation of the subjective attitude and also abstraction of the present object. Namely, it abstracts the determinateness of the concept from the concrete representation of the subject matter, which makes the subject matter show itself as inherently already logical. On the other hand, however, since this logical determination is the result of subjective activity, it is the opposite of the concrete representation or subject matter insofar as it is the subjective determination of it. Thus,

the logical element can appear on account of this presupposing to be in the subject matter as something already completed, just as because of the positing it can appear as the product of a merely subjective activity. But the two moments are not to be separated.<sup>25</sup>

Hegel criticizes the one-sidedness brought about by realism (John Locke and the empiricists) and transcendental idealism (Kant) separating the two sides, pointing out that these two analyses are “void of concept and undialectical.”<sup>26</sup> They both advance from the concreteness of representation to abstract determination, which may also exhibit an advance from lower to higher until it reaches the most abstract essence that is empty identity, but there is no conceptual content in this, because when each stage of abstraction is more abstract than the last, it may also be accepted as a given object, a concretion of the representation. Even those abstract determinations as those of formal logic are unreflectively taken as already constituted concretes. Therefore, the only principle of this analytic cognition is abstract identity alone with no consideration of the conceptual content of each object. Its pure form of expression is mathematical analysis. Mathematical operations are a “thoughtless act, one that a machine can also therefore perform.”<sup>27</sup> Of course, there is also some form of synthetic proposition in mathematical analysis, like the proof of a theorem, the checking of a solution, but “[s]uch a proof can express no more than the tautology that the solution is correct because the prescribed operation has been performed.”<sup>28</sup> Hegel argues, the only true synthesis (and not just the outer appearance of synthesis) in mathematics only emerges through differential calculus and the infinitesimal analysis of the changing quantity or variable, because:

underlying this analysis [...] is a fundamental qualitative determination of magnitude that can be comprehended only by the concept. The transition to this determination from magnitude as such is no longer analytic; to this day [...] for the transition is not of a mathematical nature.<sup>29</sup>

Engels also states in the *Dialectics of Nature*,

The turning point in mathematics was Descartes' variable magnitude. With that came motion and hence dialectics in mathematics [...] Mathematical infinity is taken from reality and therefore can only be explained from reality and not from itself, from mathematical abstraction [...] The differential calculus for the first time makes it possible for natural science to represent mathematically processes and not only states: motion.<sup>31</sup>

As Hegel sees it, it is when something involves “infinite” determination that is the concreteness of the concept, that it requires combining analysis together with synthesis, or more precisely, it requires viewing analysis as such as synthetic; because determinateness can no longer be presupposed by the problem itself, but must instead be posited by the problem's conceptual content through self-movement of the concept, through the concept referring to itself as an other. “Analysis becomes synthetic when it comes to determinations that are no longer posited by the problems themselves.”<sup>32</sup>

Synthesis is the “second premise” of cognition (as “syllogism”), which obviously can be seen as the conceptual cognition of a higher form of cognition, because it is not abstracting (analyzing) from the concreteness of the representation, but is instead rendering the abstract principle concrete, “reflecting” on the conceptual content of the abstraction. But just as analysis still is not synthetic analysis in its one-sidedness, so synthesis still is not analytic synthesis in its one-sidedness at the beginning either; it is not the concept itself unfolding as active self-synthesis of the objective subject matter, but is merely the human being subjectively using the unity of the concept to synthesize the diversity of the objective subject matter (like Kant’s *a priori* synthesis). Therefore, “[i]t is not the absolute reflection of the concept.”<sup>33</sup> The concept does not reflect on its own activity and freedom in the subject matter, and the unity of the manifold that it grasps is only externally necessary determination, not the identity of the subject’s explicit concept for-itself. In other words, it is not the identity actively demonstrated by the concept itself. Precisely because the identity of the concept is only taken as the subjective inner identity of cognition itself, it is only for the object just identity externally added onto differences:

Although what in the object corresponds to the concept is no longer the abstract but the determinate form of the concept and hence the concept’s particularity; the singularizing element in the object is nevertheless still a given content. Consequently, although this cognition transforms the objective world into concepts, what it gives to it in accordance with conceptual determinations is only the form; as for the object in its singularity, in its determinate determinateness, this it must find; the cognition is not yet self-determining [...] [The same is true from a subjective perspective] [...] It likewise finds propositions and laws, and proves their necessity; but it proves the latter not as a necessity inherent in a fact in and for itself, that is to say, it does not demonstrate it from the concept; it proves it rather as the necessity inherent to a cognition that delves into given determinations, into phenomenal differences, and cognizes for itself the proposition as a unity and relation, or cognizes the ground of appearance from the appearance itself.<sup>34</sup>

Such synthetic cognition has passed through the three stages of definition, division and theorem.

In Hegel’s account of synthesis, he reveals the limitedness and abstractness intrinsically belonging to one-sided synthesis and shows the content of rational essence that it contains. For example, making definitions could determine subject matters based on subjective ends arbitrarily determined and could also proceed by space or numerical quantity, but when it involves the concrete object of nature and spirit, this necessitates introducing the concept of genus species. The relation between species and genus must take empirical fact as the standard and see within which scope a property of the species or

genus is invariable and within which scope it is common to all; this can only be determined through analysis.

But the only possible attestation that a thought determination, or any single one of the immediate properties, constitutes the simple and determinate essence of the subject matter is its derivation from the concrete constitution of the latter. But this would require an analysis that transforms the immediate elements of this constitution into thoughts and reduces their concreteness to a simple thought determination; and this is an analysis of a higher order than the one just considered, for it would not be abstractive; on the contrary, in the universal it should still retain the singular character of the concrete, should unify it and show that it is dependent on the simple thought determination.<sup>35</sup>

However, this higher analysis cannot be done by pure definition. The definition is merely satisfied with finding a few "common points" among empirical representations, a few external "features" in common (like using earlobes to define human beings). Definitions sometimes approximate the essences of things, but those are always completely contingent. In this case,

from their externality one can also see that the cognition based on concepts did not begin with them; it was rather an obscure feeling, an indeterminate but profound sense, an intimation of the essential that preceded the discovery of genera in nature and spirit, and only afterwards was a specific externality sought for the understanding.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, whether the content of the definition is necessary truth or contingent appearance, this goes beyond the scope of definition as a problem, because the content of the definition is always immediately given: "It has no justification," because "it renounces comprehending it conceptually," and "is nothing but the form determination of the concept."<sup>37</sup> Thus, the universal definition must appeal to the division of particulars, which is to say, it must determine the hierarchical (genus-species) relation between various definitions; it must determine a definition's suitable position within a system and determine the relative positions of all definitions. Synthetic cognition tries in this way to eliminate the contingency of the definition and attain knowledge of the necessary essence. Hegel insists such a consideration has due value: "The advance from the universal to the particular characteristic of the concept constitutes the basis and the possibility of a synthetic science, of a system, and of systematic cognition."<sup>38</sup> It therefore corresponds to the inner necessity of the concept.

But division similarly is not conscious of its conceptual content; it always considers that universal definition by which it divides species to be a concrete representation or "commonality." It is excusable in doing so, because the determinateness of any definition is indeed equivocal; it could equally stand for a concrete representation and have the universal sense of a concept,



“[f]or it follows only upon the form determination of the concept without [following upon] that form’s immanent reflection,”<sup>39</sup> or rather (in our words), without probing different experiences of the same determination, it will be a few purely contingent determinations. The formalism of division is such that it only considers the extension of the division or the aspect of quantity, demanding the division be completed in seeking the concept of “exhausted” species; the qualitative determinateness of the genus-concept, however, is arbitrary and contingently given, so given that a new distinctive mark emerges in experience, the entire system of divisions must readjust, the number of species succumbs to inexhaustible additions, and division becomes devoid of principle, fragmentary and purely contingent. Hegel insists the current scientific division roughly still appearing to be a system is purely due to “an instinct of reason.”<sup>40</sup> This instinct allows humans to choose unknowingly those essential marks that are in fact most vital (the teeth in the case of animals, the reproductive flowers in the case of plants) as the basis of division, thereby “implying” the inner connection of the concept. Division can only augment cognition by ascending from the abstract to the concrete, which requires turning the universal and not the concrete representation into the ground of division:

At least inasmuch as it has the form of the concept for its basis, it is the simple, abstracted from the concrete, that on the contrary comes first, for only in this form does the subject matter have the form of a self-referring universality and of an immediacy that accords with the concept.<sup>41</sup>

Hegel calls the former approach “a method *appropriate to nature*,” and the latter approach “one *appropriate to cognition*” (Hegel 2010, 714). When the problem is one of understanding and knowing, and not simply one of passively taking, the latter approach from abstract to concrete is an easier method for grasping, a method of cognition that is both more rational and more appropriate to the concept. “It is in this manner, no longer as it is given in intuition, that the matter should be grasped.”<sup>42</sup> This enables us to pierce through the representational layer of the concrete and understand the conceptual content, internal contradiction and necessity of movement and development inside of it. Hegel cites many examples from everyday life (reading, geometry, natural science etc.) to illustrate that cognition always first starts from the abstract and then rises to the concrete whole. The conclusion is that “[i]n short, everywhere the abstract must constitute the starting point and the element in which and from which the particularities and rich shapes of the concrete spread out.”<sup>43</sup>

It should be clear that Marx uses this method of Hegel’s as a model for his own when he mentions “the method of political economy” in the introduction to *Critique of Political Economy*:

The concrete concept is concrete because it is a synthesis of many definitions, thus representing the unity of diverse aspects. It therefore



appears in reasoning as a process of summing-up, as a result, not as the starting point, although it is the real point of origin, and thus also the point of origin of perception and imagination.<sup>44</sup>

But he complains that,

Hegel accordingly arrived at the illusion that the real was the result of thinking synthesising itself within itself, delving ever deeper into itself and moving by its inner motivation; actually, the method of advancing from the abstract to the concrete is simply the way in which thinking assimilates the concrete and reproduces it as a mental concrete. This is, however, by no means the process by which the concrete itself originates.<sup>45</sup>

In history, the simpler, the more abstract and the more general is always produced later, or at the very least, it is only shown that it is the abstract and general later on. In the beginning, it is always the concrete undifferentiated whole, which potentially contains the seeds of internal self-differentiation and moving development. As it develops, it later realizes its whole variety of potential connections and enables thinking to turn back around and know the inner essence of this earliest concrete thing. But we must not take this concrete as an external material carrier or outer shell of conceptual movement. Even if this concrete is reconstructed using a system of concepts in thought, the concreteness of the representation cannot be thrown away as worthless junk. Because it is not only the original, actual basis for the formation of the concept, but also the premise for fully formed scientific systems to improve and develop forward with open attitude. Marx therefore argues, "The subject, society, must always be envisaged as the pre-condition of comprehension even when the theoretical method is employed."<sup>46</sup>

Hegel finally touches the third stage of synthetic cognition, namely the form of "theorems." Unlike the first two stages, "[t]he subject matter is known in its reality, in the conditions and the forms of its real existence. Together with the definition, therefore, the subject matter exhibits the idea, which is the unity of the concept and reality."<sup>47</sup> This synthesis is no longer a synthesis brought to a subject matter from the outside, but rather "is the properly synthetic element of a subject matter."<sup>48</sup> The theorem is always applied in singular cases, so it always requires demonstration. Even the axioms in geometry must undergo proof of demonstration. It is only because such proof of evidence must be deduced from the concept that geometry considers the axiom to be (self-evident) requiring no evidence (because geometry does not consider concepts, only spatial and quantitative relations). Since the theorem only expresses relations of singular reality as such, the theorem by itself still lacks the necessity of the concept and must obtain proof from the concept. Hence, the theorem can only express that Idea which is the unity of concept and reality by combining with definitions, and with definitions understood by virtue of the concept. Hegel praises Euclid's geometry for:

delivering the most accomplished exemplar [...] To start with, Euclidean geometry has from ancient times been renowned for the order in the progression of its theorems, whereby for each theorem the propositions required for its construction and proof are always found already proved.<sup>49</sup>

Hegel, however, argues that because it does not start from the concept, “the definitions with which the beginning is made apprehend the sensuous subject matter as immediately given,” so its order is not deduced from the concept itself, but “it still has primarily to do with the external ordering of purposiveness.”<sup>50</sup> The purposiveness here points to expediency and convenience of understanding. Hegel points out that in fact, the theorems of Euclidean geometry include two parts, “one of which can be regarded as the concept, and the other as the reality.”<sup>51</sup> Those theorems for the congruence of two triangles aim at simplifying the triangles given in intuition and sensibility into the conceptual definition of the triangle as such; equations such as the Pythagorean theorem thereby deduced generate the complete, real definition of a triangle. So Hegel suggests that Euclidean geometry as a “truly synthetic progression is a transition from universal to singularity, namely to that which is determined in and for itself, or to the unity of the subject matter in itself.”<sup>52</sup> But Euclidean geometry itself is not conscious of this point; it does not recognize that those real definitions of itself are mediated by the concept, and those procedures for proving them that it designs are entirely external and are only formally necessary:

the proof is not a genesis of the relation that constitutes the content of the theorem; the necessity is present only to insight, and the whole proof is only for the subjective interest of cognition [...] These circumstances, which the construction has presented, are a consequence of the nature of the subject matter; here they are converted instead into the ground and the mediating relations.<sup>53</sup>

Hegel calls this external procedural ordering “a remote inkling and hint of the requirements of the concept.”<sup>54</sup> Clearly enough, Hegel’s mentioning of premonitions, implied hints, instincts of reason and so on, throughout theoretical reason, reflects his attempt, aided by some sort of irrational experience, to break the external formalism of intellectual cognition (via the understanding) within the limits of the understanding, even though he only resorts to it as a temporary measure, because for Hegel, what truly breaks formalism is not mysticism but “the good” or the Idea of practical reason.

Hegel argues this synthetic cognition that Euclidean geometry represents is still superficial and one-sided. Wishing to bring it in present form to empirical science and even philosophy would only have absurd consequences:

That such a method of demonstration is strictly bound to the cycle of rigid necessity of finite reality, and that *freedom*, that is, *the concept* and

with it *everything that truly exists*, lies beyond it and is unattainable by it. [...] And in fact, since the principle of philosophy is the *infinite free concept* and all its content rests on that alone, the method suited to a finitude empty of concept is inadequate to it.<sup>55</sup>

We, however, see in Euclidean geometry and the progression of synthetic cognition in general that Hegel already points out the intrinsic conceptual progression contained in it: "In synthetic cognition, therefore, the idea achieves its purpose only to the extent that the *concept* becomes *for the concept* according to its *moments of identity* and *real determinations*, or of *universality* and *particular differences*—further also *as an identity* which is *connectedness* and *dependence* in diversity."<sup>56</sup> The concept becomes "for the concept," but the concept still does not "know itself" from its subject matter, and is therefore "not being-for-itself." The concept passes from necessity over into freedom when it sees the subject matter as itself, as the concept itself, at which moment it becomes the determined concept that exists in-and-for-itself, which is "the practical Idea," or "the Good."

### The good

The theoretical Idea, analysis and synthesis, from abstract to concrete—this is the general progression of knowing. Cognition is imbued with the inner impulse of life, which pushes cognition to grasp the objective subject matter, or to use Hegel's formulation: to realize itself as the objective subject matter. But at the theoretical stage, cognition always fails to see the objective subject matter as cognition itself, that is, the product of conceptual movement; cognition fails to recognize itself in the subject matter. In the theorem and proof, cognition already attains the necessity of a finite reality, so the subjective concept has already obtained certain contents from the objective world, but the subjective concept is not satisfied with this, with merely proving itself objective. As a subjective impulse, it still wishes to further demonstrate this objectivity, and all objectivity is freely and actively posited by itself; this is what the practical Idea wishes to demonstrate. Since the theoretical Idea already proved the necessity of cognition's content, and "this necessity is mediated by the subjective activity," this proves the subject is not a tabula rasa but a concept that can take on the task of determining.<sup>57</sup> When this subject-concept is explicitly and consciously determining for-itself, it is the Idea of will.

Hegel argues, the Idea of the will stands in opposition to the actual as something actual with objectivity; it affirms the actuality of itself and the non-actuality of the world, which is the reverse of the direction taken by the theoretical Idea. It is thereby certain of the absoluteness of the subject and the subjective concept, and of the nothingness of the objective world standing in opposition to the subject. It wishes to posit its own objective world by itself. First, as the idea of pure, abstract impulse of life in cognition, it undergoes the dialectical passage from abstract to concrete, attains the most concrete

singularity in practice and enters itself into an actual relationship with objective actuality. This singularity as act of will is in one respect finite, which is restricted by other actual things; but now that it is itself the concept, it is also something finite possessed of infinity. It is active “in itself, as negative unity as such.”<sup>58</sup> The will treats a finite particular purpose as the good, a good that truly possesses its own infinite value within itself because it is essentially the active realization of the concept. However, the very premise of its realization is the objective world, which again makes the good merely subjective and finite. The good does not presuppose the objective world, but is merely a “should” and can be seen as complete solely as “absolute postulate” (just as in Kant). “There still are two worlds in opposition, one a realm of subjectivity in the pure spaces of transparent thought, the other a realm of objectivity in the element of an externally manifold actuality, an impervious realm of darkness.”<sup>59</sup> This opposition is rooted in the good and the will’s essence, because the moment of the theoretical Idea is absent in it. What makes practice what it is, practice, is the following:

This actuality constantly confronting it as an insuperable restriction is in and for itself a nullity that ought to receive its true determination and intrinsic value only through the purposes of the good. It is the will, therefore, that alone stands in the way of attaining its goal, because it separates itself from cognition and because for it external actuality does not receive the form of a true existence. The idea of the good can therefore find its completion only in the idea of the true.<sup>60</sup>

That is to say, the contradiction intrinsic to practice, the contradiction internal to the will is that its purpose, the good, is found inside of itself standing opposed to the actual world outside of itself; it still is not the actualized good; it still has not become the complete good. The good here is merely a subjective “should,” and consequently the actual outside of it is still not considered “the Idea of truth” itself; the Idea of truth is still seen by it as effectively beyond the external actual world. On the other hand, the will is also the act of realizing as such, an act that assumes external actuality is null and cannot resist this act of realizing the good. But if it remains merely a “should” for the will and the will does not go actually practice it, then it is not true will. Hegel calls these the two “premises” of the syllogism of action and considers the Idea of good the mediation of the two.

In the first premise, the good purpose immediately refers itself to the actual, which it uses as the means to realize this purpose. Of course, such means originally develop out of the idea of cognition at the “theorem” stage, which is to say, after the human being recognizes a universal connection or regularity of objective actuality, one may utilize this regularity (theoretically manifesting as a theorem) that they recognized as a means of realizing one’s own purpose. Thus, the second premise is, the good takes this “objective concept” (objective law) “for the concept” as a means of opposing external actuality

in order to pursue the objective realization of the purpose.<sup>61</sup> But just as the purpose is utilizable as a means of even higher purposes once the purpose is realized, the means as such were originally realized as a purpose in the first place (for example, cognition like analysis, synthesis etc., is first purposeful for grasping objective laws), and “[s]o too now in the syllogism of the good the second premise is already immediately present in the first in itself.”<sup>62</sup> But the good is not satisfied with this immediacy; it is not content with the immanent unity of means and end, but instead by sacrificing or abandoning its means and consuming its means, it makes itself identical with external objectivity. It then becomes not only the concept existing for-itself but also “the concept in and for itself”; “the immediate realization of the purpose first becomes the actuality of the good as concept existing for itself.”<sup>63</sup> Of course, the purpose of the good may also fail in its activity:

If it is now claimed that the purpose of the good is thereby still not realized, what we have is a relapse of the concept to the standpoint that it assumes prior to its activity [...] Its sole ground is that in the sublation of that abstract reality the sublating itself is just as immediately forgotten, or what is forgotten is that this reality is rather already presupposed as an actuality which is in and for itself worthless, nothing objective.<sup>64</sup>

In other words, the reason for failure is that it treats reality with the subjective attitude and takes as the premise the abstract reality in subjective representation, while forgetting that the purpose of the act is to sublimate this abstract reality, prove its false insubstantiality and demonstrate the objective truth of the concept. This plunges us into the “bad infinity.”

This repetition of the presupposition of the unrealized purpose after the actual realization of the purpose also means that the subjective attitude of the objective concept is reproduced and perpetuated, with the result that the finitude of the good, with respect to both content and form, appears as the abiding truth, and its actualization always as only a singular, never universal, act.<sup>65</sup>

Although the singularity of the will lacks the universality of cognition and truth, it has for-itself the defective power to sublimate itself. Namely, it has the power of self-negation, to negate itself by itself, and consequently, though it is the singular subjective attitude of the will, effectively “this activity is in truth just as much the positing of the implicit identity of the objective concept and the immediate actuality.”<sup>66</sup> By influencing and changing external actuality (for even if the practice fails, it still changes actuality in some way), it sublimes the appearance of the subject matter and exposes the essence of the “objective concept” of the subject matter, which is itself brought into the realization of the purpose of the good or a successful practical process (failure is the mother of all success). In the realization of the good, one consciously recognizes that

the objective subject matter possesses conceptual essence, the subjective concept possesses objective existence and thus the premise of the syllogism of action: “[i]n this the presupposition itself is sublated, namely the determination of the good as a merely subjective purpose restricted in content, the necessity of first realizing it by subjective activity, and this activity itself.” This reaches the conclusion or result of the syllogism:

The idea of the concept that is determined in and for itself is thereby posited, no longer just in the active subject but equally as an immediate actuality; and conversely, this actuality is posited as it is in cognition, as an objectivity that truly exists [...] Thus the subject now exists as free, universal self-identity for which the objectivity of the concept is a given, just as immediately present to the subject as the subject immediately knows itself to be the concept determined in and for itself.<sup>67</sup>

The purpose is realized (successfully through failure), which makes the subject conscious that objective actuality is in essence posited by the concept, but it is not posited by the concept merely stalled within subjective singularity, or in other words, it is not posited by the subjective attitude of the will but by this subjective attitude sublating its own subjective singularity. The subject consequently discovers that actuality as the objective concept is presupposed and given to the subject as immediately present objectivity. What the activity of the will gains in the process of realizing the purpose is knowing, but this time it is no longer simply abstract theoretical knowing that is sought via investigation; rather, it is cognition of the free inner substance, that is, the identity of the subjective and objective, which is the subject who views the subjective concept as objective substance and objective actuality as the active concept through the mediation of practical activity; it is knowing that human knowing is nothing other than the self-knowing of the objective concept. Hegel calls this knowing absolute truth or the absolute Idea

Hegel’s analysis of the epistemological significance of practice is extremely important. Lenin, speaking highly of it, states:

Undoubtedly, in Hegel, practice serves as a link in the analysis of the process of cognition, and indeed as the transition to objective (“absolute,” according to Hegel) truth. Marx, consequently, clearly sides with Hegel in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge.<sup>68</sup>

Lenin also praises what Hegel calls the syllogism of action:

And that is true! Not, of course, in the sense that the figure of logic has its other being in the practice of man (= absolute idealism), but vice versa: man’s practice, repeating itself a thousand million times, becomes consolidated in man’s consciousness by figures of logic.<sup>69</sup>

Practice in Hegel is on the one hand the criterion for cognition's truthfulness, and on the other hand a necessary stage of cognition itself, namely, what mediates the shift from "the cognition that is a seeking" into "the cognition of truth," which is cognition's self-referring negation of itself and the negation of the negation. In effect, practice *as* cognition does not fall from Heaven in Hegel's philosophy, nor is it added into cognition from outside of it, for it is instead developing out of the inner activity or living source of cognition itself. As we have argued previously, Hegelian cognition (theoretical cognition) is itself an active process, a life impulse aiming at the outer world; but the practical concept (containing the will, the good, purpose etc.) is seen as the life impulse in the higher sense, the life impulse that, after passing through theoretical knowledge, manifests as a self-conscious conceptual drive both intentional and purposeful. It is a free will that is autonomously legislated; it is a rational, purposive evaluation that is "the good." Precisely for this reason, when it reunites with theoretical reason as identical with it at the last stage and attains "the absolute Idea," it is "on the one hand, a turning back to life; on the other hand, it has equally sublated this form of its immediacy and harbors the most extreme opposition within." It becomes "imperishable life."<sup>70</sup> If practice is not first possessed of certain theoretical cognition, it will conversely degrade into the impulse of blind desire and will fail to become the impulse of rational will, but no matter how it turns out, the essential characteristics of practice, the will and even all Ideas in Hegel are the subjective impulse, subjective self-referring negativity and the impulse to make subjectivity identical with objectivity. The subjectivity of the concept, "whose subject distinguishes itself as self-referring negative unity from its objectivity and is the latter's being-in-and-for-itself [...] refers to it essentially through itself and is, therefore, self-directed purpose and impulse."<sup>71</sup> The Idea is neither a dead image without impulse and movement nor a sprite, nor a number nor an abstract idea:

The idea, because of the freedom which the concept has attained in it, also has the most stubborn opposition within it; its repose consists in the assurance and the certainty with which it eternally generates that opposition and eternally overcomes it, and in it rejoins itself.<sup>72</sup>

The essence of this self-contradictory movement of cognition can only be determinately grasped as undergoing the historical journey from universal (life) to particular (theory), then to singular (practice), as the practical activity of ascending from abstract to most concrete and consequently returning back to the immediate experience and immediate intuition of the beginning. Thanks to such a grasp, cognition is no longer just a pure theoretical interest nor is it simply a practical instrument or pragmatic means any longer, but is instead an absolute "method," which is both the form or mode of attaining the identity of subjective and objective and "the soul of objective existence."<sup>73</sup>



Cognition is the subject-object whose subject matter is itself and knows itself as such. This is Hegel's dialectical epistemology, which, by passing through such a development, already distinctly expresses itself as having ontological significance.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel 2018, 103.
- 2 Hegel 2010, 677.
- 3 Ibid., 678.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid., 678.
- 6 Lenin 1976, 216.
- 7 Hegel 2010, 682.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid., 684.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid., 687.
- 13 Ibid., 688.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Marx & Engels 1988, 76.
- 16 Hegel 2010, 694.
- 17 Ibid., 695.
- 18 Ibid., 697.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Many people only pay attention to the meaning of the first aspect and ignore the meaning of the latter aspect when discussing the dialectical movement from abstract to concrete. For example, Wang Shuren argues: "All scientific understanding elevates from abstraction to concreteness, and this path of understanding begins with the most abstract basic elements. Only by positing this beginning, and building from it step by step, can we construct a rich system of scientific knowledge" (Wang 1985, 153). Wang Shuren does not realize that the beginning category of "being" in Hegel's *Logic* can by no means be "posited," but instead must "posit" itself.
- 21 Hegel 2010, 699.
- 22 Ibid., 700.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., 701.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid., 704.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., 706.
- 30 Engels 1934, para. 5.
- 31 Ibid., para. 41.
- 32 Hegel 2010, 707.



- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid., 707.
- 36 Ibid., 711.
- 37 Ibid., 712–13.
- 38 Ibid., 713.
- 39 Ibid., 716.
- 40 Ibid., 717.
- 41 Ibid., 713.
- 42 Ibid., 714.
- 43 Ibid., 715.
- 44 Marx 1971, para. 62.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid., para. 59.
- 47 Hegel 2010, 718.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid., 721.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid., 722.
- 53 Ibid., 723–4.
- 54 Ibid., 725.
- 55 Ibid., 727–8.
- 56 Ibid., 728.
- 57 Hegel 1991, 297.
- 58 Hegel 2010, 728.
- 59 Ibid., 731.
- 60 Ibid., 732.
- 61 Some people describe the three terms of “reasoning for action” as: “(1) The major premise is the immediate connection of the end to the actual; (2) the minor premise is external means, that is tools; (3) the conclusion is the objective actual as that which passes over from the subject into the unity of the subject and the object” (Zhong 1986, 339). See also (Yang 1986, 200), whose formulation is worth considering. For Yang, the first term, “immediate connection of the end to the actual” is understood as the end’s connection with the objective. Hegel actually speaks of end and means, because the relationship between end and objective can only be mediated (because the end is mediated by the means), and only the relationship between end and means is immediate. Secondly, Hegel’s minor premise does not refer to the means but to the relationship of the means to the actual world (and the objective). With these two relations as the premises, the end is actualizable as the objective and as the relation of identity between the subject and the object. Such a misunderstanding occurs because “syllogism” is not simply a relationship between the three concepts, but a connection (i.e., judgment) between every two of the three concepts.
- 62 Hegel 2010, 732.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Ibid., 732–3.
- 65 Ibid., 733.

- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Ibid., 733–4.
- 68 Lenin 1976, 211.
- 69 Ibid., 216.
- 70 Hegel 2010, 735.
- 71 Ibid., 673.
- 72 Ibid., 674.
- 73 Ibid., 527.

## 6 The agreement of dialectical epistemology with ontology

We can distinguish the following three levels within Hegel's doctrine here for purposes of clarification.

### Being is thinking

As everyone knows, Hegel is an objective idealist, distinguished by viewing the substance of objective being as a mental substance, which is "objective thought." Hegel says in *Encyclopedia Logic*, "[t]he expression 'objective thoughts' signifies the truth, which is to be the absolute object, not merely the goal of philosophy."<sup>1</sup> "Just as thinking makes up the substance of external things, so it is also the universal substance of all things spiritual."<sup>2</sup> Of course, the thinking (or thought) mentioned by Hegel here does not refer to the mental activity, consciousness or psychological functioning that is demonstrated in a concrete person. Rather, it refers to that moving and developing existence of essence according to laws within the objective thing itself. One can accuse Hegel of pantheism and anthropomorphism, but Hegel himself would not confess to either charge. Instead, in order to avoid such misunderstandings, Hegel suggests replacing the word "thoughts" with "thought determinations" (*Denkbestimmung*), arguing,

when it is said that thought as objective thought constitutes the core [*das Innere*] of the world, it may seem as if, by this, consciousness is supposed to be attributed to natural things. [...] We would therefore have to speak of nature as the system of unconscious thoughts, a "petrified intelligence," as Schelling puts it.<sup>3</sup>

Hegel asserts that the essence of objective existence is thinking, not because he regards natural things as "conscious" but because:

- ① Only thought can grasp the universality of the thing, "but the universal is itself one of the moments of the concept."<sup>4</sup> For Hegel, what is natural is always what is singular, manifold and sensuous, while thought alone is what is universal. Were it not for natural things possessing the essentialities

of thought, they would not be understandable in the slightest. Even the completely incomprehensible as such (the thing in-itself) is the product of thought, for to say something of it is to already understand it. "The individual taken by itself [*für sich*] does not correspond to its concept; this limitation of its existence constitutes its finitude and its demise."<sup>5</sup> So Hegel argues, "Logic thus coincides with metaphysics, i.e. the science of things captured in thoughts that have counted as expressing the essentialities of things."<sup>6</sup> What ontology (i.e., metaphysics) investigates is not sensuous appearance but the essence of things, and only thinking can grasp this universal essence. From this point of view, the subject matter of ontology is thinking, which is epistemology.

- ② Owing to this universality of thought, thinking presents to the person's consciousness and psychological functions that which is objective and independent of the person's imagination, passions, interests and impulses, such that we cannot place the human power of thought alongside the human being's other faculties (like representation, intuition, will etc.).<sup>7</sup> Thought is the only objective element consistently linking together and running through all subjective acts of mind. For this reason, even when investigating the mental substance of the human being (spirit), we have to investigate it in combination with the substance of objective things, for both investigations concern the same mind, *nous* or reason. Ontology is also identical with epistemology in this subjective sense.
- ③ Hegel concludes from the above two points that ontology is truly speaking epistemology, and that epistemology is truly speaking Logic, that is, the science of pure thought. Therefore, ontology is truly speaking Logic as well. Epistemology becomes that which mediates and secures the identity of Logic and ontology. In the last part we mentioned that since in Hegel truth is the objective thing corresponding with its concept, we may not say of concepts that they are either true or untrue, and may only question whether a concept is pure or impure, insofar as only objective things are either true or untrue (as we say of a friend that she is a "true friend" or of art that it is a "true piece of art"). But pure concept or pure thought is expressed by way of logic, so ontology only reaches this agreement with Logic through the agreement of epistemology with Logic. The subject matter of ontology's concern is not general thought, but pure thought that is free of all (sensuous) impurities and hence thought which is freely knowing and moving in itself:

In the *Logic*, thoughts are considered in such a way that they have no other content than that which belongs to and is generated by thought itself. In this way, the thoughts are pure thoughts. Thus spirit relates purely to itself and is therefore free, for freedom is precisely this: to be at home with oneself in one's other, to be dependent upon oneself, to be the determining factor for oneself.<sup>8</sup>

Visibly here, when Hegel criticizes thought's three attitudes toward objectivity (that of old metaphysics and empiricism, critical philosophy, and immediate knowledge), he is basically detailing three of his own ways of considering thought and objectivity, where he considers his own philosophy as resuscitating old metaphysics on a higher level.<sup>9</sup> The peak of agreement that thought and objectivity reach in Hegel's consideration goes beyond old metaphysics for touching the most important point of the free essence of objective thought. Actually, this point gives Hegel his most fundamental reason for arguing that objectivity is thought:

Freedom is immediately entailed by thinking because thinking is the activity of the universal, a relating of itself to itself that is accordingly abstract, a subjectively non-determinate being-with-itself [*Beisichsein*] that at the same time, as far as its content is concerned, is only in the basic matter and its determinations [...] Since in thinking things over their true nature emerges and since this thinking is just as much my activity, that true nature is equally the product of my spirit insofar as the latter is a thinking subject. It is mine in accordance with my simple universality, i.e. as an I that is entirely with itself—it is the product of my freedom.<sup>10</sup>

Hegel only argues after making these determinations that “[in] accordance with these determinations, thoughts may be called objective thoughts.”<sup>11</sup> In Hegel's view, only this free activity of universal thought can burn dead objective matter as fuel and make the fixed determinations flow. Only the free activity of universal thought can sublimate the rigid oppositions between subjective and objective, between thinking and being. In other words, in his view, if someone finds dissatisfaction in the past metaphysical approach of viewing the world as rigidified, unchanging being and wishes to understand movement, flux, life and development, one would have to agree with Hegel's viewpoint by viewing the essence of the world as objective thought and seeing the objective thing as the product of thought's free active movement, but to reach this viewpoint one would again have to gain entry by way of dialectical epistemology. When epistemology attains knowledge of the truth of objective absolute substance in its innermost lived experience, in that active movement of itself from abstract to concrete and from knowing to practicing, we get a “window” into the essence of objective being, to speak Heideggerian for a moment. Logic as the system of pure thought becomes on this basis the vital soul of philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit. At this point, no one needs to look elsewhere any longer for the standard and measure of objective things: “[I]et these determinations, alive in themselves, count for themselves.”<sup>12</sup> This ontological attitude is the objective attitude that withstands the test of subjective demonstration and proof.

Of course, Hegel's proof here still has a fatal weakness, making it hard for it to withstand attacks from two fronts, one from subjective idealism, the other from materialism. Both fronts attack asking, how could thoughts existing in

the human brain simultaneously be “objective” thoughts? Is Hegel’s deduction of ontology from epistemology sufficiently grounded? We will take up these questions in the next part. Here we must first see how Hegel tries to consolidate his position in this regard in order to solidly ground objective idealism’s ontology.

### **Thinking can know being**

In Hegel’s view, to ultimately get around subjective idealism and materialism, there is only one path, which is to take from the ancient “ontological” proof of God’s existence. Hegel found the opportunity to present this proof in many different places. He argues the existence of objective thought (God) is thereby provable along with the claim that human thought may know this objective being, which as such is thinking.

From the perspective of the materialist dialectic, thinking may know being, which is an epistemological principle that has been proven by human history and social practice. When Hegel brings practice into epistemology, he already approximates the viewpoints of the materialist dialectic and historical materialism. However, in this respect Hegel is not thoroughgoing in a twofold sense. First of all, he does not demonstrate that all human cognition originates from social practice, but merely argues in overarching fashion that cognition originates from the life impulse, which results in conflating the living movement of human beings (practice) with the living movement of animal beings (instinct) on the question of the origin of cognition. Secondly, after Hegel steps into the practical attitude from the theoretical attitude, he ultimately reverts back to the absolute theoretical attitude and takes this point to be the springboard for returning back to the self-consciousness and theological truth of God. This turns his entire *Logic* into a major ontological proof for the existence of God. What effectively makes Hegel’s ontological proof far more meticulous and far more brilliant than the more naive forms of the ontological proof given in the past is that it allows him to introduce practice to mediate. Past ontological proofs of God went up in smoke when Kant’s hands got to them, for Kant applies formal logic to the analysis of the concept of being from a purely theoretical attitude and shows that being (Sein) cannot be taken as a predicate of the concept of some thing, and thus, we cannot derive the objective existence of the content of some concept from the intension of that concept alone. For instance, to say I have the concept of “one hundred shillings” is not to say that I actually possess one hundred shillings. The two statements say two fundamentally different things. Thus, saying I have a concept of God is not equal to saying I have proven that God actually exists. Kant derives from this the conclusion that God and the thing in-itself are unknowable. Hegel, however, argues: “The move from particular finite being to being as such in its totally abstract universality is to be regarded not only as the very first theoretical demand but also as the very first practical one.”<sup>13</sup> In practice, the pursuit of infinite being, that is, free being, enables one to consider

finite being as nothing; since God is the infinitely free being, "his concept and his being are unseparated and inseparable."<sup>14</sup> This is God's "activity, creation, power, and so forth, [which] are the bringing forth of an other."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, "God as living God, and better still as absolute spirit, is only recognized in what he does," and is not just recognized from "his works."<sup>16</sup> Hegel introduces "objectivity" from "the subjective concept" in "the Doctrine of Concept." He makes it clear that the syllogism of the concept (i.e., the highest stage of the syllogism) is an ontological proof of God's existence. However, the concept only attains absolute identity with objective being, that is, the Absolute Idea, in the syllogism of action in "the Idea" section. Hegel does not, however, determine the practice or reasoning of action as the ultimate and sole criterion for testing the Truth. Instead, Hegel still argues that the truth is its own criterion, because practice still requires returning back to "absolute" knowing and practice itself as a "syllogism" is but a form of cognition's externalization; it is a practicing of spirit and of concept. Thus, he thinks the Idea of practice, the Idea of the good "is superior to the idea of cognition just considered, for it has not only the value of the universal but also of the absolutely actual."<sup>17</sup> But this superiority is only said in comparison to the previous "inferior" form of cognition "that is still a seeking," not to "absolute" knowing or the cognition of Truth. For the latter, practice is still defective and requires refinement before reaching "the Absolute Idea." The highest attitude is not practical but theoretical, epistemic. This means that in the final analysis, he believes that concepts and ideas are the standard for testing practice. "The idea is, therefore, only in this self-determination of apprehending itself."<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, from Hegel's point of view, being is knowable by thinking, for the fundamental reason that being itself is thinking. So thinking's relation to being is nothing other than thinking's relation to itself. Being is knowable by thinking and "truth means in general the agreement of a content with itself."<sup>19</sup> In this process of agreeing, thought itself presents three layers of thinking, which Hegel designates with three essentially identical words, that is, concept, idea and absolute idea. The concept is already the substance of absolute being. In Hegel's view, all is conceptual or everything is an expression of the concept. The nature of the concept is, on the one hand, is its universal form, and on the other hand, its free subjectivity, so it freely shapes in itself the pulsating, living movement and development of all actual things. But the concept as thinking is not yet conscious at first that it is objective in itself; the concept becomes alive in actual things, but still sees actual things as opposed to itself, so

the concept is as such not yet complete, that it must rather be raised to the idea which alone is the unity of the concept and reality; and this is a result which will have to emerge in what follows from the nature of the concept itself.<sup>20</sup>

The Idea is the concept as well, but it is the concept that has grown mature. The universality of the concept becomes in the Idea cognition of the essence

of actual things, while the free subjectivity of the concept is the active practice of actual things, by which it becomes the concept's self-realization. In the concept, the universality of the concept becomes an understanding of the nature of the real thing. So, thought, Idea and rational concept become thinking about truth. "The idea is the adequate concept, the objectively true, or the true as such. If anything has truth, it has it by virtue of its idea, or something has truth only in so far as it is idea."<sup>21</sup> What Hegel calls "adequate" concept is the fully developed and therefore appropriate and competent concept because it has passed through the "objectivity" stage. Namely it possesses the moment of the real in itself. Hegel insists:

If we now reserve the expression "idea" for the objective or real concept and we distinguish it from the concept itself and still more from mere representation, then we must also even more definitely reject that estimate of it according to which the idea is something with no actuality.<sup>22</sup>

Lenin asserts that Hegel's statements here, "are perhaps the best exposition of dialectics. Here too, the coincidence, so to speak, of logic and epistemology is shown in a remarkably brilliant way."<sup>23</sup> Lenin is also visibly here demonstrating the agreement of ontology ("logic" in the broad sense) and epistemology, for which reason he praises Hegel: "Hegel brilliantly divined the dialectics of things (phenomena, the world, nature) in the dialectics of concepts"; "these concepts are shown as reflections of the objective world" and so on.<sup>24</sup>

However, Hegel also insists the Idea, though already identical with objective reality at the stage of practice, is not yet conscious of this identity. The "should" and the reality are still opposed, and the Idea always assumes that its own purpose transcends reality in the world beyond. Only in the Absolute Idea can truth become "self-knowing truth," and "all truth."<sup>25</sup>

Thus the subject now exists as free, universal self-identity for which the objectivity of the concept is a given, just as immediately present to the subject as the subject immediately knows itself to be the concept determined in and for itself.<sup>26</sup>

In other words: the two moments of the concept itself, its free subjectivity and infinite universality, now manifest as absolute "method," that is, the logical movement of the concept by itself. It shows that the dialectic of human cognition is also the dialectic of the objective thing. Absolute truth is not the transcendent world remote from this immanence of the human being's actual practice and cognition. Hegel shows here objective idealism's total faith in "knowability" but undeniably colors it with absolutism and dogmatism at the same time, because he self-encloses his system at the very end (at least in epistemological terms) in "the Absolute Idea" and does not further develop the dialectical relation between absolute truth and relative truth. Truth



develops to the climax and is completed, and while it shows only relativity before truth's development is complete, once it is complete, it is absolutely completed. Truth, of course, still has its own impulse at this stage to externalize in exchange for freedom; however, that is not the continuing advance of truth itself but the practical application of it, where it becomes "the *Logic* applied." The truth's progression is only for the sake of once again returning to itself and reaffirming itself in each science of actual life. Yet the truth itself is already sketched out and concealed in Hegel's pocket at this point; the truth has already been declared at this point now and so its development has ended. This is the conservative aspect of Hegel's dialectic that Engels finds so important to underline: "the conservatism of this mode of outlook is relative; its revolutionary aspect is absolute—the only absolute dialectical philosophy admits,"<sup>27</sup> because "therein lay the true significance and revolutionary character of the Hegelian philosophy [...] It once and for all dealt the death blow to the ultimate finality of all product of human thought and action."<sup>28</sup> It brings one neither doubt nor dogmatic judgment but the confidence of an ever-growing enterprise, forever unsatisfied with the impulse to know—this is precisely what those who only know how to yell and shout at the compulsory structure of Hegel's system will never have any way to understand. Thus, once we look upon Hegel's Absolute Idea solidly footed from this higher vantage point, we will logically deduce the following viewpoint: the absoluteness of theory exists in practice, and the absoluteness of practice exists in the never-ending development of human history, which is the viewpoint of Marx's historical materialism.

### **Thinking produces being**

Considering the substantive content of the problem, we could argue that for Hegel thought is thinking because it goes beyond itself and produces being, while cognition is cognition because it can actualize through practice. We still have to consider this point. We should clarify by saying Hegel's ontological proof of absolute objective being (God) is not totally void of reasonable elements. If we merely understand the deduction of being from thinking from a contemplative theoretical attitude, it is of course delusional idealism, but after we add the practical viewpoint to it, matters change somewhat, because practice is itself the movement of beginning with preexisting cognition and concepts and actualizing them as objective being. Practice is not some blind life impulse, but a conscious, purposeful activity of self-awakening, whose very premise is thought and consciousness and whose purpose is to prove (in action) the objectivity of the subjective content in consciousness:

The activity of purpose, therefore, is not directed at itself, is not a matter of letting in a given determination and making it its own, but of positing rather its own determination and, by means of subsuming the

determinations of the external world, giving itself reality in the form of external actuality.<sup>29</sup>

We pointed out earlier that the word “speculation” in Hegel’s speculative philosophy mainly refers to an inference or deduction that is not groundless. This deduction as “the syllogism of the concept” is the ontological argument, and as the syllogism of action it is the purposive activity of practice. We could therefore argue that practice is the highest form of expression of Hegelian speculation, because speculation itself does not merely stop at the subjective but should rather actualize into objectivity. Hegel’s epistemology only becomes thoroughly speculative in the truest sense through practice. Speculation is the belief in the identity of subjective and objective, but it by no means determines the identity of subjective and objective in the form of immediate finite presentation as one would argue the concept of one hundred shillings is equal to the actual existence of one hundred shillings. Rather, speculation presents this identity as an actual movement of practice and actualizes the potential identity of subjective and objective latent within finite things. “As is everywhere the case, the speculative identity is not that trivial identity that concept and object are in themselves identical.”<sup>30</sup> If I have a concept of one hundred shillings (assuming “one hundred shillings” were also a “concept”), then I could earn one hundred actual shillings through my practical activity, which actualizes the identity of the concept of one hundred shillings and its (potential) reality. This identity is for the concept potentially existent, but practice (as the nature of the concept itself) can make it actually exist, because practice is the infinite actual identity of subjective and objective. Practice can create everything, and this active nature of practice is found as potential within the concept, because what makes the concept not simply representation but concept is its universality and also the free impulse to realize itself. Its universality is the principle of its free impulse, so it is not the subjective impulse of arbitrary instinct but an impulse with objective propensity, which, after actualizing as objectivity still preserves its own subjective identity; it can make itself contain both subjective and objective sides and control them within itself. Its free impulse is the simplified and purified embodiment of its universality, so it is not one of the finite, abstract concepts of the understanding. Quite the reverse, it is the infinite, active, concrete concept, which carries all of what it harvests forward in the course of the historical development of its own movement, always becoming richer and more concrete while simultaneously preserving the simple transparency of itself. Lenin for this reason praises Hegel:

Remarkable: Hegel comes to the “Idea” as the coincidence of the [Idea] and the object, as truth, through the practical, purposive activity of man. A very close approach to the view that man by his practice proves the objective correctness of his ideas, concepts, knowledge, science.<sup>31</sup>

Thinking produces being, which for the acting and practicing subject is firstly a belief (that thinking can produce being), secondly an experience (thinking is being), and finally is cognized by thought as an immediately present objectivity (being is the product of thinking).

(1) The belief that thinking produces being is the subject's belief. That is, the subject believes thinking is by itself actual but believes that non-thinking, non-conceptual objective world standing opposed to itself is not actual:

But the certainty of itself that the subject possesses in being determined in and for itself is a certainty of its actuality and of the non-actuality of the world; [...] The subject has here vindicated objectivity for itself; its inner determinateness is the objective [...]; the previously objective world is on the contrary only something still posited, an immediate which is determined in a multitude of ways but which, because it is only immediately determined, in itself eludes the unity of the concept and is of itself a nullity.<sup>32</sup>

This belief, as a subjective certainty, is the purpose of an action. Action is impossible to take without purpose, and not even the subject herself believes a purpose is actualizable without having any certainty of itself. Without the latter, it is just a delusional dream not a purposive end that could cause action. Therefore, the purpose is a certain belief in subjectivity even if it is still unrealized: "A certain particular purpose, but not one that first receives its truth by being realized; on the contrary, it is for itself already the true."<sup>33</sup>

(2) Thinking produces being is also an experience of the subject. When purpose is brought into realization, it must have its own means of doing so. The relationship of ends to means differs from the relationship of purpose to purposive being and to the outer objective world: the former is an immediate connection; the latter is a connection that is brought about by mediation (through the means). Thus, we could describe the means as the purpose's immediate, actual experience of its own objectivity.

"The first premise of this idea's action is the immediate objectivity of the concept, according to which purpose is communicated to actuality without any resistance and is in the simple connection of identity with it."<sup>34</sup> Hegel in fact already gave his account of this connection of purpose and means in the Idea of "life" and the parts on "Objectivity" and "Purposiveness" before it, where, however, this connection is mainly spoken of with regard to the connection between soul and flesh. As Hegel states in the section entitled "Life":

The living stands over against an inorganic nature towards which it behaves as its power and which it assimilates to itself [...] [T]he living demonstrates itself to be something that reaches over and beyond its other [*übergreifend über sein Anderes*] which is incapable of withstanding its power. The inorganic nature that is subjugated by the living endures

this because it is in itself the same as life is for itself. Hence, in the other, the living is merely connecting with itself.<sup>35</sup>

Hegel also writes when discussing purpose:

The relation of the purpose as power to this object and the latter's being conquered by it is immediate [...] The purpose seizes the object immediately because it is the power over the object [...] The living entity has a body; the soul takes control of it and has immediately objectified itself in it [...] A human being must first take possession of his body, as it were, so that it may be the instrument of his soul.<sup>36</sup>

But this immediate relationship of the soul's control over the body and that of the soul's experience of the body essentially already covers the subject's mediating relation to the external object. "The second premise is for the first already postulated."<sup>37</sup> Indeed, even the soul's power of immediate control over the body and the soul's capacity to immediately experience the body is slowly formed from the time of infancy through prolonged practice and learning. Every immediate experience is already the result of mediation. We can realize a principle from this: when the subject uses her own limbs (as instruments, means) to act on an external object and make an external object (as instrument, means) act on another external object, these external objects can step one by one from external connections of mediation into the internal connections of the subject's immediate experience through this subjective activity. Such is visible in every seasoned worker, in well-experienced pilots, captains and athletes (when we speak of instruments and mechanism as "parts" of someone). The thing in-itself becomes something for-me and the inorganic world of nature becomes the "inorganic body" of the human being. As Marx puts it:

The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body—both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity.<sup>38</sup>

In effect, insofar as tools are the human being's "extended hands," the entire world of nature for the same reason could be seen as means of human self-production. Thus, the human being can immediately experience and freely control the whole of nature as her own body in practice. To use Hegel's terms, this is a process of passing over into immanence, that is, advancing from external purposiveness into immanent purposiveness, into the purposiveness of "the individual's reproduction" as end in-itself:

By seizing hold of the object, the mechanical process passes over into an internal process by which the individual appropriates the object in such

a manner that it takes away from it its distinctive make-up, makes it into a means, and confers upon it its own subjectivity as its substance. This assimilation thus coincides with the individual's process of reproduction considered above.<sup>39</sup>

In this respect, what Marx says is quite close to Hegel.

Finally, (3), thinking produces being is also an objective fact and moreover the totality of fact. Hegel derives the following conclusion when discussing purposiveness: "The moment of externality is not just posited in the concept, the purpose is not just an ought and a striving, but as a concrete totality is identical with immediate objectivity."<sup>40</sup> The purposive annexes the mechanical and the chemical and turns them into its own means. The whole world is thus for Hegel a system of purposes, a system that is moving and acting by the concept and thought positing itself as the purpose of itself. During his account of "the Idea of life," Hegel reduces life to the "genus," that is, humankind, through whose living activity the entire world's system of purposes finds expression. When discussing "the Idea of cognition," humankind as knowing subject becomes conscious of its own freedom and universality and consequently of the identity of itself with the concept existing in and for itself,

Thus the subject now exists as free, universal self-identity for which the objectivity of the concept is a *given*, just as immediately present to the subject as the subject immediately knows itself to be the concept determined in and for itself [...] The previously discovered reality is at the same time determined as the realized absolute purpose.<sup>41</sup>

Such self-consciousness in Hegel's view is not the self-consciousness of the individual any more than it is the self-consciousness of humankind as a particular species, but is rather the self-consciousness of the objective and universal Absolute Idea. Ultimately, Hegel insists that he is not speaking of the human being and human thought but objective thought, God's thought, the purposive and cognitive activity of God coming from this thought, which makes Hegel see all that exists as products of thought. Marx asserts that Hegel's "absolute spirit" is nothing more than "the metaphysically disguised unity of both, real man and the real human species."<sup>42</sup> Actually, thinking produces being is not a closed fact that is presupposed as Hegel falsely proposes but an open fact posited by actual human beings and the actual human species; it is not a fact simply awaiting cognition but a fact depending on practice. The "progression to the bad infinite,"<sup>43</sup> into which human practice falls is not broken by sublating and transcending the good purpose, but is continually broken solely by the good purpose continuously sublimating in practice, elevating from finite purpose to infinite purpose, from external purpose to immanent purpose, from pragmatic purpose to spiritual purpose,

because the good, practice, the all-around development and freedom of the human being's essential powers is alone the actual "absolute purpose," or to sum it up in a word: the human being is the purpose.

In any case, Hegel's introduction of the practical standpoint into epistemology results in not only bringing his epistemology and ontology into agreement but also rendering epistemology and ontology dialectical. We have already examined the dialectic of Hegel's epistemology, and now all that remains to be done is to analyze his dialectical ontology.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel 1991, 66.
- 2 Ibid., 59.
- 3 Ibid., 58.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid., 283.
- 6 Ibid., 58.
- 7 Ibid., 59.
- 8 Ibid., 60.
- 9 See the preface to the first edition of *Science of Logic* (Hegel 2010).
- 10 Hegel 1991, 57.
- 11 Ibid., 58.
- 12 Ibid., 61.
- 13 Hegel 2010, 65.
- 14 Ibid., 66.
- 15 Ibid., 62.
- 16 Ibid., 626.
- 17 Ibid., 729.
- 18 Ibid., 736.
- 19 Hegel 1991, 62.
- 20 Hegel 2010, 518.
- 21 Ibid., 670.
- 22 Ibid., 671.
- 23 Lenin 1976, 162.
- 24 Ibid., 196.
- 25 Hegel 2010, 730.
- 26 Ibid., 733–4.
- 27 Engels 1946, para. 5.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Hegel 2010, 730.
- 30 Hegel 1991, 266.
- 31 Lenin 1976, 191.
- 32 Hegel 2010, 729.
- 33 Ibid., 730.
- 34 Ibid., 732.
- 35 Hegel 1991, 289.
- 36 Ibid., 280.

37 Hegel 2010, 732.

38 Marx & Engels 1988, 75–6.

39 Hegel 2010, 686.

40 Ibid., 669.

41 Hegel 2010, 733–4; italics in original.

42 Marx & Engels 1956a, para. 23.

43 Hegel 2010, 733.

## Part III

# Hegel's dialectical ontology

Aside from the *Logic*, Hegel has no other ontology. Hegel once called his philosophy “the science of logic that makes up metaphysics proper or pure speculative philosophy.”<sup>1</sup> He insists that the *Logic* consists of “the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit.”<sup>2</sup> He traces his doctrine back to the ancient Greek philosopher Anaxagoras:

Anaxagoras is celebrated as the man who first gave voice to the thought that *Nous*, thought, is the principle of the world; that the essence of the world is to be defined as thought. In this, he laid down the foundation for an intellectual view of the universe, the pure shape of which must be logic.<sup>3</sup>

Hegel divides the *Logic* according to objective logic and subjective logic. “Objective Logic” contains the “Doctrine of Existence” and the “Doctrine of Essence,” and according to him, “it thus takes the place rather of the former metaphysics.”<sup>4</sup> But this does not mean that “Objective Logic” is Hegel’s ontology (W. Wallace argues this, for example; See also, Zhang Shiyong, *On Hegel’s Logic*, p. 216). On the contrary, objective logic, as ontology, is the critique of all past ontology (metaphysics): “The objective logic is therefore the true critique of such determinations.”<sup>5</sup> “Logic, however, considers these forms free of those substrata, which are the subjects of figurative representation, considers their nature and value in and for themselves.”<sup>6</sup> So as the ontogeny of the concept, it is only considered ontology as the advanced demonstration and proof of ontology or subjective logic. Hegel states his reasons for placing objective logic before subjective logic thus:

that the truth has to prove [*bewähren*] itself precisely to be the truth, and here, within the logical sphere, the proof consists in the concept demonstrating itself to be mediated through and with itself and thereby also as what is truly immediate. Only the concept is what is true [*das Wahre*] and, more precisely, the truth of being and of essence.<sup>7</sup>



It should be clear from this that although objective logic already belongs to ontology, it is mainly critical in character (the critique of past forms of metaphysics). Only subjective logic, despite also including critique, is ontology in the strict sense. Ontology has historically always been the discourse about being or existence, but for Hegel only the concept, which is subjective, presents the essence of being, that is, the truth of existence, where “subjective” expresses not the personal viewpoint of the inner mind, but the active constitution of subjective substance. Hegel’s ontology here, which differs from traditional metaphysics, is dialectical ontology.

Hegel expresses this dialectical ontology through his doctrine of the “subject-substance.” Although this discourse reaches its highest stage and hence greatest clarity of demonstration in the “Doctrine of Concept” part of his *Logic*, to truly trace it inside and out, one would have to draw an equal sign between it and the whole of Hegel’s philosophy. In other words, although the core part of Hegel’s dialectical ontology is “the Doctrine of Concept” in his *Logic*, truly grasping the ontological significance of the doctrine of concept would require pulling into focus the whole of his philosophy. We only wish to explore two questions of the most essential significance here: one of them involves Hegel’s “pre-*Logic*,” that is, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the other involves his “post-*Logic*,” that is, the *Philosophy of Nature*. The two questions are: (1) On what grounds does Hegel’s conceptual substance prove itself to be the substance of everything? In other words, conceptual substance is substance on which grounds? (2) How does Hegel’s conceptual subject turn itself into the substance of everything? In other words, what is the role of the conceptual subject as substance? We can only gather a true understanding of the Doctrine of Concept’s logical elucidation of ontology in the *Science of Logic* by clearing up these two questions. It is through this clarification that we will grasp Hegel’s thought of unifying ontology and logic.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel 2010, 9.
- 2 Ibid., 29.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid., 42.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Hegel 1991, 134.

## 7 Substance as ontological ground

Marx argues that Hegel's absolute spirit is the metaphysically disguised human being; it contains two moments, Spinoza's substance and Fichte's self-consciousness. "The first element is metaphysically disguised nature separated from man; the second is metaphysically disguised spirit separated from nature."<sup>1</sup> Of course, unlike Spinoza's and Fichte's metaphysical approach of dogmatism, Hegel gives his absolute spirit a critical appearance by making the subject (self-consciousness) and substance explain each other and ground each other. But substantively speaking, this is still a more refined metaphysics that turns real human beings and the real human species into some sort of abstract conceptual being. When Hegel explains his Absolute Spirit as the sole substance of everything natural and human from consciousness to social life and products of spirit, he does no more than treat his own abstract thought as objective substance, or rather, he deduces substance from his own abstract subject.

Here we have the opportunity to discuss that problem raised in the previous part but left unsolved: Where does Hegel ultimately learn that the thought existing in his head is objective thought? Has Hegel planned to produce proof in this regard? After Hegel laughs off Kant's silly notion that one should not go into the water before learning how to swim, how does Hegel explain his own secret way of learning how to swim? If we are to know, we cannot start with the *Logic*, because the *Logic* is already well grounded in "objective thought" (absolute knowledge) at the very beginning. We must start instead with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline* why he regards "objective thought" as the goal and absolute subject matter of philosophy:

My *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which when it came out, and for the reason now given, had been designated the first part of the system of science, began with the first, simplest appearance of spirit, namely immediate consciousness, and developed its dialectic up to the standpoint of the philosophical science, the necessity of which is shown by this progression. For the sake of this end, however, it was not possible to remain content with

the formal aspect of mere consciousness, for the standpoint of philosophical knowing [*Wissen*] is in itself the most basic and concrete.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Hegel begins in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with what is present before empirical consciousness and “proves” that the absolute object of consciousness is that absolute knowledge or objective thought which is identical with consciousness and its movement, through analyzing the dialectical structure and dialectical movement internal to this consciousness. However, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing in his view but a concrete positive science, which is not lower (as philosophy of nature is) or higher (as history of philosophy is) in comparison with the other positive science or “applied Logic” of his philosophy. The appropriate position that *Phenomenology of Spirit* legitimately occupies is the second moment of “subjective spirit” in the *Philosophy of Spirit*. So on what grounds does he solely single it out from the whole system (despite augmenting it quite a bit) and turn it into the first part or introduction of the scientific system? Would it not be equally possible to begin another way, for instance, from the philosophy of nature or the history of philosophy? Hegel, seemingly without giving any explanation, steps into the scientific system starting from the phenomenology of spirit. This is a completely accidental event. Even though he declares the empirical science of consciousness to only have the significance of “the path of doubt” or of a “ladder,” without explaining why he uses this ladder and not another ladder, his beginning and introduction remains incapable of dodging accusations of being uncritical or dogmatic.

Konrad Cramer gives an explanation for Hegel in his article “Bemerkungen zu Hegels Begriff vom Bewußtsein in der Einleitung zur ‘Phänomenologie des Geistes’.” When answering the question of why Hegel considers the determination of general knowledge and truth from the perspective of states of consciousness, Cramer insists that Hegel’s way of processing it arises from the need of having a viable testing mechanism for those bogus scientific viewpoints contending with the scientific standpoint in philosophy without letting these viewpoints think this mechanism is external to them, but this would only be possible if it provided them with a minimum description of a basic distinctive feature that made them accept such a description without hesitation as fitting. Cramer argues Hegel does provide such a description of this distinctive feature. He shows that those contending viewpoints all have a common characteristic, which is they must all be seen as viewpoints about consciousness and this obviously corresponds with their own self-understanding. Cramer argues this point is the minimum and also indispensable theoretical presupposition of Hegel’s thought about the empirical science of consciousness.<sup>3</sup> In our view, that is to say, Hegel starts from consciousness and sets his sights on bringing everyone and every conscious agency into his scientific system through their own respective analyses of consciousness under the guidance of the empirical science of consciousness by which he derives from personal subjective consciousnesses a super-personal, universal or objective standard

of consciousness. Cramer's "pedagogical" explanation bordering on a "sociology of knowledge" does not have any basis whatsoever in Hegel. At the very most, it is a guess at Hegel's intention. Hegel himself denied that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is "that through which unscientific consciousness is immediately enabled to enter into science."<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, he insists it is the process of formation of knowledge itself. Furthermore, even if the matter were truly as Cramer suggests, Hegel would still face a problem, which is how he knows for certain his own structure of consciousness or the nature of his own consciousness is the same as that of others. How does he know for certain his consciousness is identical with the consciousness of another human being?

In addition, the problem also concerns the structure of consciousness itself. In the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel makes the following classic determination of consciousness: "consciousness distinguishes something from itself while at the same time it relates itself to it."<sup>5</sup> Cramer questions this sharply as to what gives Hegel the right to make this determination.<sup>6</sup> In other words, he is asking what right Hegel has to judge as impossible a state of consciousness that is not differentiating from itself and referring to itself.<sup>7</sup> Cramer's consideration does derive a conclusion worthy of attention, namely, that we could understand Hegel's propositions of consciousness as propositions demanding transcendently to be true.<sup>8</sup> Cramer adds that transcendental here does not refer to Kant's synthetic a priori propositions or analytic propositions in the ordinary logical sense, insisting that Hegel's propositions of consciousness can only be analytically true as explanations of event-concepts that do not submit to the rules of language.<sup>9</sup> But Hegel fails to prove such analytic truth, because he never explains why consciousness necessarily has this structure of "being differentiated from and simultaneously referring to something" and why only consciousness has this structure. Cramer insists the consciousness (or self-consciousness) that Hegel takes as the object and premise of analysis is rather taken immediately from Kant's transcendental deduction, but drops Kant's meticulously careful spirit of critique. He goes on to say, the problem of how to provide complete grounding for the need of consciousness to refer to an object that differs from consciousness and for the need to define consciousness are all Kantian problems that Hegel totally dismisses in this formula of his.<sup>10</sup> Cramer concludes that Hegel's theory of consciousness appears outstandingly naive against the background of theoretical upbringing that Kant initiated,<sup>11</sup> and that the presupposition of the whole empirical system that Hegel made under the premise of his minimum, inarguable and formally invariable structure in which he had to describe consciousness cannot and need not obtain a scientific defense through this science, which rather can only operate under the conditions of his system.<sup>12</sup> These insights from Cramer are richly enlightening, but at the very end he ultimately pushes this hung unsolved problem of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (i.e., what grounds this structure of consciousness of being differentiated from and referring to something?) off into Hegel's "Speculative Logic," assuming logic resolves the problem of phenomenology.<sup>13</sup> This then slips us right back into

the labyrinth that Hegel designs for us, for, as we recounted previously, Hegel's phenomenology is for the sake of showing the necessity of comprehending philosophical science, but the necessity of comprehending the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is itself shown by this philosophical science (*the Logic*): neither is of any help to the other in this case.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel in fact shows the doubly uncritical nature of it at the very beginning. First, he assumes science, knowledge or truth, that is, the shape of subjectivity with objective content, is internally developed from the empirical shape of consciousness itself. Originally there could be other opinions on this matter, for instance, arguing the empirical shape of consciousness is the very product of the human being's sensuous practical activity and consequently scientific knowledge ultimately originates from the practical relating of the subjective and the objective. But Hegel's eyes are singly nailed to Kant's doctrine of unknowability and the mechanical reflectionism of the old materialism. He tries to deduce all objective contents from the single source of the most "immediate" (for him this can only be "immediate consciousness"). This does not simply stem from the needs of pedagogical method or expression, but from the deeper needs of ontology. Second, in order to accomplish developing scientific knowledge out of consciousness internally, he also postulates the basic structure of all shapes of consciousness, that is, consciousness differentiates itself from something and simultaneously refers to it, while understanding this structure as cognitive, namely, that "something" which subjective consciousness differentiates from and refers to is understood as having the implicit meaning of "the objective subject matter" and that which exists in-itself, so the structure of consciousness is itself understood as meaning "the referring of the subjective to the objective." The other possible ways of structuring consciousness like non-cognitive modes of willing, feeling and intuiting, are categorically excluded by Hegel, or at the very least, they are not considered as the most basic. Besides, even if we read it according to Hegel's cognitive signification, since that "something" of which consciousness is conscious only has the false outer appearance of "objective subject matter," for it is only consciousness of object, how can this internal structure of consciousness avoid the psychological interpretation and truly become the formation of scientific knowledge as such and as a process? This is still a significant problem. If we discover every time in our own empirical consciousness that what was once thought of as "objective subject matters" and their relating of subjective and objective are all actually posited by my consciousness, then I am left with three alternative explanations: (1) all objective subject matters are parts of consciousness, so consciousness alone is the true "objective subject matter"; (2) no consciousness is sufficient to absolutely grasp the objective subject matter, which is either because consciousness is by nature finite and cannot grasp the thing in-itself (as Kant argues); or (3) because the subject matter is by nature infinite, and the process of consciousness grasping the thing in-itself is an infinite process, this process can only infinitely approach the thing in-itself while forever remaining incapable

of exhaustively grasping it (as Marx argues). Hegel chooses the first alternative explanation, but never provides his own choice with sturdy reasons. Aside from ridiculing Kant's doctrine of unknowability (a criticism of Kant he only seriously unfolds in the *Logic*) and the epistemology of empirical natural science, the only reason he directly presents is epistemological absolutism: "This conclusion arises from the following: that the absolute alone is true, or the true alone is absolute."<sup>14</sup> Although he does not think people can grasp absolute truth immediately all at once, he at the very least believes now is the time when consciousness may become "absolute knowing" and that absolute truth is now graspable once and for all. This absolute knowing is self-consciousness of consciousness, or the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness. Clearly, even though Hegel himself declares that science cannot entirely hinge on assertion,<sup>15</sup> and despite his "thoroughly negative and critical appearance," this appearance is still premised on the absolute assertion of uncritical idealism: "there is already latent in the *Phenomenology* as a germ, a potentiality, a secret, the uncritical positivism and the equally uncritical idealism of Hegel's later works—that philosophic dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world."<sup>16</sup>

In "Absolute Knowing," Hegel replaces consciousness's reference to the object, that is, the subject matter, with self-consciousness's reference to consciousness. Thus, science becomes the conceptual understanding of self by itself. By "conceptual understanding," Hegel means nothing other than objective, universal understanding *of* the object, which sublates the singularity of subjective consciousness and turns the singular I into the "universal I" or objective I. In this conceptual shape, self-consciousness "has wrested the entire substance from consciousness and has absorbed into itself the entire structure of the substance's essentialities, and [...] producing the substance from itself, and thus re-establishing the substance for consciousness."<sup>17</sup> The substance is "produced" and "posited" by the concept and universal self-consciousness, while the concept and universal self-consciousness develop out of consciousness and singular self-consciousness. Hegel accuses Spinoza's substance for lacking subjectivity and the principle of freedom, while what he proves in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is "[e]verything hangs on grasping and expressing the true not just as substance but just as much as subject."<sup>18</sup> He not only gives subjectivity to the substance but essentially gives substantiality to the subject, or rather, he makes the subject reveal its own substantiality to itself and posits its own substantiality through the subject's lived experience of itself. He claims, however, in this way, "that substantiality comprises within itself the universal, or, it comprises not only the immediacy of knowing but also the immediacy of being, or, immediacy for knowing."<sup>19</sup> This is, however, delusional or speculative voodoo, because what Hegel calls "being" here or "immediacy for knowing" is but "knowing itself." As long as consciousness knows something, that something becomes the object of consciousness, while knowledge becomes the objective relationship of consciousness to object. As Marx puts it: "In the speculative way of speaking, this operation is called

comprehending Substance as Subject, as an inner process, as an Absolute Person, and this comprehension constitutes the essential character of Hegel's method."<sup>20</sup> Knowing is itself the subject matter of knowing, so the object of knowing is knowing itself, which is a tautological proposition (What I know is I know). The trick of Hegelian speculation is to word things not only to be good for remembering but also, when needed, to be good for forgetting as well. Knowing is presupposed as the subject matter or object of knowing beforehand, and when considering the subject matter of knowing in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel "forgets" where this subject matter comes from and takes it to be an objective being falling from Heaven for knowing. Later, in the logical progression he then gradually "recalls" this primordial background of being, but by this time such an origin is already clad in holy colors. It is through this trick that Hegel can declare "objective thought" as being the absolute subject matter of philosophy, that is, truth or "God."

Some sort of instinct makes Hegel feel that such objective thoughts or subject matters of knowing are insufficient to become objective substance or the substance of the world merely in the shape they present within empirical consciousness. If thought wishes to become objective, it must first consider how objectivity becomes "thought." In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel already examined how the subject matter in empirical consciousness becomes consciousness and self-consciousness, but this is still not enough, for it is still only an appearance of consciousness. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel demonstrates how existence in general (being) takes shape into the concept through the deepening of the "essence," but this is still not clear, because being does not just refer to objectivity or mean "objective being," for it also comprises the meaning of subjective certainty as in "I am I," or we should rather say, "being" is the pure abstract determinateness that transcends both subjectivity and objectivity.<sup>21</sup> It is a logical category that is applicable to both objective being and subjective being.<sup>22</sup> In the "Doctrine of Existence" and the "Doctrine of Essence," Hegel lists a great number of examples from the natural sciences to demonstrate the progression of categories, but at the same time there are many examples dealing with spiritual matters like morality, religion, the state and so on. Such examples still do not directly involve this fundamental ontological problem of how subjective thought becomes objective and how objectivity becomes thought. Only in the "Doctrine of Concept," in the transition from subjective concept to objectivity and in the progression of objectivity itself from mechanism to chemism to organism, does Hegel directly face the problem of thought and concept refer to the entirety of the objective world that is nature. In effect, even though Hegel is frequently dismissive of nature, it ends up being precisely this speculative metaphysical viewpoint on nature and natural science that makes up the crux or key to Hegel's doctrine of substance that is "Absolute Spirit." When Hegel devotes the entirety of three chapters in the *Science of Logic* to specifically accounting for "mechanism," "chemism" and "organism" in the natural world, although he tries to go beyond the natural sciences and see them as a few universal



“logical” categories, it still exposes that the core of Hegel’s ontology is the problem of how thought and concept refers to objective nature. This problem is more concrete than that of thinking’s relationship with being and more immediately exposes the fatal flaw of Hegel’s objective idealist ontology.

At the very end of the “Subjective Concept” part of his *Minor Logic* and the opening part of the *Science of Logic*, “Objectivity,” Hegel meticulously details the traditional “ontological proof” of the existence of God. He shows that the ontological argument naively proves the unity of the concept with its “existence”: “And yet objectivity is just that much richer and higher than the being or existence of the ontological proof, as the pure concept is richer and higher than that metaphysical vacuum of the sum-total of all reality.”<sup>23</sup> The existence (being) obtained by the ontological proof is far too abstract and vacuous; it either cannot avoid conflating it with sensuous finite existence, which leaves it open to Kant’s attack (“I either have one hundred shillings or I do not”), or it remains nothing more than an external determination of abstract reflection like Spinoza’s “substance,” which does not relate in any concrete way to the bustling world of diverse sensuous life. Hegel tracks the course of conceptual development from being (Sein)—determinate being (Dasein)—existence (Existenz)—substantiality and actuality—objectivity, and argues that objectivity is far richer and more concrete than prior stages: “objectivity is the immediacy as which the concept has determined itself by the sublation of its abstraction and mediation.”<sup>24</sup> The sense expressed by the term “objectivity” here is twofold; it first of all means “the being of the concept in and for itself,” where the object is completely permeated by the concept and is given to the subject as an immediate ready-made thing. Thus,

the cognition of truth is made to rest on the cognition of the object as free of any addition by subjective reflection, and right conduct on the adherence to objective laws, such as are not of subjective origin and are immune to arbitrariness and to treatment that would compromise their necessity.<sup>25</sup>

This is the general attitude of the natural sciences, and is in fact that of (old) materialism. This objectivity is generally present in mechanism and chemism. The second sense of objectivity then refers to the “non-being of the concept in and for itself,” “since the concept equally has to restore the free being-for-itself of its subjectivity, it enters with respect to objectivity into a relation of purpose.”<sup>26</sup> This is the practical relation, in which objectivity means the opposite of the subjective self or concept, “the manifold world in its immediate existence,”<sup>27</sup> meaning the negative of the concept, the object and purpose that the concept has yet to overcome and sublate. This objectivity manifests as the purposiveness in which the object is powerless to resist the subject’s purposive activity and hence becomes the means serving the purpose under consideration. It is in and for itself “nothing.”



Hegel finally posits the concept and the subject as the true substance of the objective world through purposiveness, which dissolves into nothingness the object existing in and for itself. In other words, Hegel's doctrine of the substance is inseparable from his doctrine of the subject. In this respect, Hegel's taking of the human being's empirical consciousness as the theme of the first part of the scientific system in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is truly reasonable. This is not because doing so is expedient for getting bystanders to understand and agree, but because the one and only subjectivity that the subject (human being) knows immediately, is first simply the human being's own immediate consciousness itself. The problem is, the subjectivity of this subject the human being is not only present in his "knowing" or knowledge, and the human being's subjectivity is also not the actual subject human being herself. Hegel singles out from the human subject a one-sided, abstract faculty of subjectivity, namely, cognition and the power of thought, which he takes to be the whole of the human subject. As a consequence, he reduces all of the active movement of the human subject to this abstract subjectivity and reduces practicing to cognizing. The objective existence he proves with practice is also proven to be the objectivity or "materiality" relinquished to the external world by thinking and self-consciousness externalizing itself. Evidently, the crux of the matter here is the understanding of the subject itself. The actual subject creates actual objectivity, and the abstract thinking subject can only create abstract, speculative, "objective thoughts." Marx points out:

It is only to be expected that a living, natural being equipped and endowed with objective (i.e., material) essential powers should of his essence have real natural objects; and that his self-alienation should lead to the positing of a real, objective world, but within the framework of externality, and, therefore, an overwhelming world not belonging to his own essential being. There is nothing incomprehensible or mysterious in this [...] But it is equally clear that a self-consciousness by its alienation can posit only thinghood, i.e., only an abstract thing, a thing of abstraction and not a real thing. [...] thinghood is therefore utterly without any independence, any essentiality vis-à-vis self-consciousness; that on the contrary it is a mere creature—something posited by self-consciousness. And what is posited, instead of confirming itself, is but confirmation of the act of positing.<sup>28</sup>

Marx pierces through this abstract, one-sided subjectivity in Hegel and sees that what hides underneath it is the actual, human, sensuous and object-oriented subject herself and this actual subject's objectifying activity. Even though the subjectivity that the human being immediately knows in her own consciousness is that of the human being's objectifying life activities, practice is not a moment of human consciousness or knowing. It is instead conversely human consciousness and human knowing that is a moment of human practical activity. Therefore, what the human being's purposive activity proves to

human consciousness is not that the human being is not a conceptual being but is instead a natural being that developed out of mechanism, chemism and organism; human practice proves to human consciousness not the nothingness, immanent spirituality and conceptuality of the objective world but the identity of the objective world with the human subject's sensuous being, the identity of natural forces and the vital forces of human life, and at the same time, the externality of the natural world for human consciousness and existence along with the process of human sensuous movements actively assimilating it.

Whenever real, corporeal man, man with his feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and inhaling all the forces of nature, posits his real, objective essential powers as alien objects by his externalisation, it is not the act of positing which is the subject in this process: it is the subjectivity of objective essential powers, whose action, therefore, must also be something objective. [...] He only creates or posits objects, because he is posited by objects—because at bottom he is nature. In the act of positing, therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of “pure activity” into a creating of the object; on the contrary, his objective product only confirms his objective activity, his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being.<sup>29</sup>

This is Marx's classic account of the practical ontology of the relationship between subject and object (substance).

Due to the limitation of space, I do not want to go overboard here talking about the controversial topics of “practical ontology” or “practical materialism,” but we could certainly affirm one point, which is that materialism which posits practice as the substance does not in essence stand opposed to all past forms of materialism, which select simple natural matter for the substance. They are related as the concrete to the abstract. Practice in terms of its intension as a philosophical category contains “nature” within itself as one of its own moments (even though in extension human practical activity is only one stage or one part of nature's development), and also has epistemological significance as well. For this reason, practical ontology goes far beyond such viewpoints from before Hegel's time as Spinoza's *Deus-sive-Natura*, mechanical determinism's “body” and Kant's unknowable *Ding an sich*; it also overcomes the one-sided and abstract partiality of the materialism of the natural sciences that traditionally speaks of nature divorced from history and of substance dissociated from epistemology. Since the materialist cannot define “matter” without drawing on matter's relation to consciousness and being's relation to thinking (see Lenin's *Materialism and Empirical Criticism*, Ch.2, S.1) and since being's relationship to thinking is fundamentally a practical problem, positing as substance the most highly developed form of the natural world of matter, that is, the human form of sensuous practical activity (which contains all previous forms of nature), is a great expansion of past ontologies

of nature or matter (nature is not only the natural world but covers the history of human society as well) and at the same time contains the self-demonstration and self-defense of materialist ontology in epistemology and leaps out of the shelter of “dogmatism,” which materialism has historically been accused of taking. Precisely for this reason, in *Das Kapital*, Marx criticizes that “abstract materialism of natural science, that excludes history and its process,”<sup>30</sup> and formulates instead “practical materialism.”

In this way, we have two different or even diametrically opposed doctrines of the subject standing before us; they lead to two different ontologies respectively, that is, conceptual ontology and practical ontology. However, Marx posits his doctrine of the subject precisely through absorbing the dialectical core of Hegel's, and this dialectical core is both the means by which Hegel handily posits his conceptual ontology and the life or soul pulsating inside of Marx's practical ontology, for which reason we must now more meticulously examine the two.

## Notes

- 1 Marx & Engels 1956a, para. 23.
- 2 Hegel 1991, 66.
- 3 Horstmann 1978, 365.
- 4 Hegel 2018, 10.
- 5 Ibid., 55.
- 6 Horstmann 1978, 366.
- 7 Ibid., 374.
- 8 Ibid., 371.
- 9 Ibid., 373.
- 10 Ibid., 385.
- 11 Ibid., 386.
- 12 Ibid., 388.
- 13 Ibid., 389.
- 14 Hegel 2018, 50.
- 15 Ibid., 51.
- 16 Marx & Engels 1988, 148.
- 17 Hegel 2018, 461.
- 18 Ibid., 12.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Marx & Engels 1956b, para. 11.
- 21 Hegel 1991, 60.
- 22 Engels argues the being of the world is the premise of its unity, but the unity of the world does not consist of being, but in its “materiality.” See for reference (Engels 1970, 40–1). On this point, he also undoubtedly became aware of the same problem as Hegel's, namely that *Sein* could not resolve the problem of the world's substance.
- 23 Hegel 2010, 628.
- 24 Ibid., 628.
- 25 Ibid., 629–30.

26 Ibid., 628.

27 Ibid.

28 Marx & Engels 1988, 153.

29 Ibid., 154.

30 Marx 1906, 406.

## 8 The subject as substance coming into being

In Chapter 3, Part 2 of Volume 1, when discussing the concept of “negation,” we analyzed the three layers of “subjectivity” in Hegel, namely, self-consciousness, freedom and alienation. But we did not analyze it from the ontological angle, but from that of the empirical form of consciousness, where we were not clarifying how Hegel’s conceptual subject unfolds into the substance of everything, but were instead only clarifying how human consciousness experiences its own subjectivity. Here, we wish to consider from the ontological standpoint of connecting the subjective to the objective how Hegel posits an active ontology of the concept by describing the objective as a process of the subject’s own coming into being as objective substance through revealing the subjective soul within objective things. What this involves is primarily the “objectivity” section of the “Doctrine of Concept” and Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*, which we could argue is also his section on the “dialectics of nature.”<sup>1</sup> In this sense, J.N. Findlay’s claim is not baseless that Hegel’s system begins in the philosophy of nature.<sup>2</sup> Putting nature aside to talk about philosophy would have sounded unimaginably absurd in Hegel’s age, for even if the philosophy of nature were not the core component of a philosophical system germinating at the time, it would have still been an indispensable part of it, which was especially so for Hegel. Without the philosophy of nature, without disclosing the dialectical laws of nature, not only would the Hegelian dialectic not have had such massive impact and popularity, it straightforwardly could not have come into being.

In the “Doctrine of Concept,” after Hegel transitions from “subjective concept” to “objectivity” through the “ontological proof,” he steps into the analysis of objective nature’s mode of being, firstly the analysis of “mechanism.” However, we should note that in Hegel’s view, objectivity (mechanism, chemism and organism) still does not exclusively refer to the properties of natural things but to universal properties in the logical sense, which include material facts and spiritual facts. This is still somewhat different from the analysis undertaken in the *Philosophy of Nature*, which is purely through the lens of natural science. In “Mechanism,” Hegel begins by saying: “Spiritual mechanics, like its material counterpart, also consists in the things connected in the spirit remaining external to one another and to spirit.”<sup>3</sup> It is in this

seemingly insignificant analogy where the vanishing line of Hegel's doctrine of the subject is already comprised. Lenin points out that Hegel's discussion of mechanism is based on the following viewpoint: "mechanics is the other-being of spirit, of the Notion, etc., of the soul, of individuality. [...] Obviously, playing with empty analogies!"<sup>4</sup> In fact, Hegel deduces objectivity from the subjective concept, which already determines that his objectivity can only be speculative and abstract. In other words, his "objectivity" can only be reached by inferring and guessing through analogy. Now that "objectivity" can only be a lower-level attribute of spirit and concept, gradually ascending from this lower-level attribute to higher-level attributes not only becomes possible in principle, it becomes necessary.

When analyzing the mechanical object, what Hegel does is exclude the material and atomistic explanations of the object and introduces Leibniz's monadology with the help of "holism." Holism is the traditional view of extension and spatial substance coming from Descartes's and Spinoza's rationalist philosophies. This viewpoint argues that extension and hence substance is a continuous indivisible whole, a viewpoint that stands in sharp opposition to the atomist and individualist viewpoint held by the likes of the British empiricists and Sir Isaac Newton. Leibniz's monads reconcile holism and individualism by serving as extensionless mental substances: a monad is singular and actively reflects the whole world. Hegel argues: "Leibniz's monad would be more of an object. It is a total representation of the world."<sup>5</sup> In his view, although Leibniz's monad possesses exclusive individuality and internal subjectivity, this is only a principle postulated by external reflection; the monad as object does not actually have subjectivity that excludes otherness and it does not explicitly constitute for itself the objective total; it just immediately stands side by side and assembles with other objects (monads) into the totality. That form of unity which mixes them together and arranges them into some order (predetermined harmony) is external to each and every monad. So, the monad that should originally be (or is postulated to be) active is also completely passive as object; it does not have any self-determining, but rather completely submits to a determinism, whose principle however is that of abstract identity which connects different independent objects that are external to one another into identical relations; this by itself constitutes a contradiction: "Thus there arises the contradiction of a perfect indifference of objects to one another and of an identity of determinateness of such objects, or of the objects' perfect externality in the identity of their determinateness."<sup>6</sup> This contradiction manifests as "the mechanical process," which first of all means the communication (*Mitteilung*) of varieties of external movements or forces (including mechanical force, heat, electricity and magnetism as well as varieties of mental ideas and ethical customs), and these movements and forces are not the object's own determinate properties, and thus they are only the external forms propagated by way of ideas.<sup>7</sup> The object by itself is only a static and unmoving carrier and the movement that is accidentally imparted to it, it transmits along in equal quantity; action and reaction cancel each

other out: "The action thereby passes over into rest."<sup>8</sup> This is the "formal mechanical process." However, Hegel also points out (which the average mechanist fails to see) that since the object is indifferent to its movement, it is also indifferent to its rest. "Rest is the action thereby viewed, therefore, as brought about by an external cause."<sup>9</sup> This is equivalent to saying that rest is relative, or the result of some movement, not the "nature" of the object. Rest and motion, however, are still seen here as force that is external to the object and conveyed by the object, so such transmission still depends on objects gathering externally together in a certain range, not on this universal relation particularizing itself for itself. The resistance of the object is overcome through the transmission of movement, and its individuality is consequently destroyed, "for it is unable to constitute itself as subject in this universal, cannot make the latter its predicate,"<sup>10</sup> which demonstrates that the stronger external force is identical with the object's nature and together they constitute different moments of one and the same "real mechanical process," but here, the stronger force is still an external determination of the object by the subject, not the object negating itself all by itself, so for the object it is a blind fate, and the object does not achieve something like the subject does. However, after the object undergoes the process of mechanical movement, as a whole, it gets its own reflection in the "product of the mechanical process." That is to say, after the individualities of the singular objects are destroyed due to resistance with the universal force, that individuality identical with the universal force is repositied in the totality of all objects. This individuality is the "centrality" of the movement and force of the whole objective world, but it is not an arbitrary center; rather, it is the center possessing self-determining law. Mechanism attributes the movement of each singular object to what is outside of said object, but for the movement of the whole world of objects, it must attribute it immanently to inside the totality,<sup>11</sup> which may view movement as a lawful process emanating from a center. This is Newton's theory of universal gravitation, which Hegel calls "Absolute Mechanism."

Hegel, however, sees a good opportunity in the theory of gravitation to elicit the principle of subjectivity from mechanism. Universal gravitation as a central force is no longer external to the object, but is rather the immanent essence universally permeating and intrinsically belonging to all objects: "[t]he striving which the objects consequently have towards the center is their absolute universality, one which is not posited through communication."<sup>12</sup> Friction and resistance are not negligible, contingent appearances, but are necessary central phenomena. The object transforms from being-in-itself into being-for-itself, a true individual, which, on the one hand, points to the outside (attracting other things) and on the other hand, is contained within an absolute center (attracted by the absolute cosmic center). In both cases, the object takes the gravitational center of its identity as its own essence, so "this totality constitutes free mechanics. In it the different objects have objective universality for their fundamental determination, the pervasive gravity that persists self-identical in the particularization."<sup>13</sup> In this way, the external order

becomes the immanent law of the object itself. Hegel calls this immanent law “the reality of ideas,” to distinguish it from the accidental reality of the outside. Since no law can ever be realized in actuality with absolute precision, it is only a tendency of the object, an “ought.” It constitutes the “soul” of the objective whole and makes it strive to maintain its identity in and for itself. The object is divided into “subjective personality and external objectivity” as a whole, and this subjective, conceptual personality (subjectivity). “This self-determining unity that absolutely reduces external objectivity to ideality is a principle of self-movement; the determinateness of this animating principle, which is the difference of the concept itself, is the law.”<sup>14</sup>

Hegel deduces through universal gravitation that there is an immanent, subjective, ideal “soul” pulsating in the totality, which shares similarities with the hypothesis that Newton draws from universal gravitation that God is “the prime mover.” However, Hegel arguably did have a stronger understanding of universal gravitation than Newton and many of the natural scientists of his time. With his keen dialectical insight, he saw the duality of gravity itself as a simple unification of gravitational attraction and repulsion, centripetal force and centrifugal force: “If we want to speak of force, then there is but one force, and its moments do not, as two forces, pull in different directions. The motion of the celestial bodies is not any such pulling this way and that but is free motion.”<sup>15</sup> This advances from the external understanding to the internal understanding, breaking through the mechanistic role of Newton’s external force and giving motion to the object itself. Here, Hegel borrows an ancient viewpoint from Epicurus: “The celestial bodies go on their way, like blessed gods.”<sup>16</sup> His “free mechanism” and “principle of self-movement” also seem like they should be intrinsically connected to the “swerving movement” of Epicurean atoms. But strangely, Hegel not only intentionally avoids mentioning Epicurus here but also does so in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where he twice mentions the Epicurean theory about atoms swerving due to their own weight. In both mentions he adopts an ambiguous and casual attitude,<sup>17</sup> criticizing the doctrine for “creating a unity that is only superficial and not essential to the atom.”<sup>18</sup> Marx in contrast enthusiastically praises Epicurus in his doctoral dissertation. The mystery here seems to be that Hegel’s free subjectivity concentrates above all on the holistic view of the world because what he first demands is the universality of the concept; Epicurus and Marx, however, begin with the sensibility of the person and the individuality of the atom as principles.<sup>19</sup> In this sense we can say that the difference between the subjective soul that Hegel deduces from the “objective totality” and Newton’s prime mover is only that the former is an immanent God and the latter is an external God.

Hegel believes that God within the objective world “is however still immersed in its body” during the stage of mechanism.<sup>20</sup> As the soul of the objective world as a totality, God manifests as the “free necessity,” but each independent object also has its own independent appearance; they do not automatically tend toward that universal (ideal) central point, but instead just



tend toward another object opposed to it. In this way, identity passes through difference over into opposition and transitions into the chemical relations of objects, the stage of chemism. Chemism is the particularization and becoming-objective of the center of ideas as such. Thus, differing from mechanism, “in the chemical object the determinateness, and hence the reference to other, and the mode and manner of this reference, belong to its nature.”<sup>21</sup> It is no longer the universality of ideas suspended over and above each object. Hegel also emphasizes here that what he refers to as “chemism” refers not only to the relationship of chemical elements, but to the basis of all forms of biological and spiritual relations.<sup>22</sup> Its distinctive feature is that it “initiates the process as a self-determining” out of the intrinsic nature of chemical objects<sup>23</sup> Combination, decomposition and exchange reactions happen not because of external mechanical pressure, but because of the tension and “affinity” of the object itself. Especially in the exchange reaction (combination-decomposition reaction), an object splits off from itself a “middle term” that it uses to substitute a corresponding part of another with which it unites and becomes a neutral composite.

A body, for example, imparts a higher oxidation to one part of its mass and thereby reduces another part to a lower degree of the same, at which degree alone it can enter into a neutral combination with another differing body brought into contact with it [...] the object does not connect with another in accordance with an immediate, one-sided determinateness, but, in accordance with the inner totality of an original relation, posits the presupposition which it needs for a real connection and thereby gives itself a middle term by virtue of which it unites its concept with its reality in conclusion.<sup>24</sup>

This chemical process is already quite similar to the organism and biological process. That is, an individual differentiates a part from itself as a means to change and assimilate its object, so it already implies the concept of “purposiveness.” “There is here a rudimentary self-determination of the [concept] from its own resources in its realization.”<sup>25</sup> But in chemism, such activity is ultimately not planned in advance, and is only a one-time process. When the reaction ends and another neutral substance (salt) is formed, the chemical process is interrupted and it cannot be sustained and maintained by itself. So “true, an appearance of vitality is there, but it is destroyed in the product” [...] “life is a chemical process made perpetual.”<sup>26</sup>

Hegel clearly sees that the fundamental difference between chemism and the purposive (organism) is that in chemical reactions: “the totality of the reactions exists only as a sum, not as an infinite return-into-self.”<sup>27</sup> “For chemical processes do not hang together, otherwise we should have life, the circular return of a process.”<sup>28</sup>

In other words, organic life is “the infinite process which spontaneously kindles and sustains itself.”<sup>29</sup> Chemical processes “are extinguished in the

neutral body and not spontaneously rekindled in it.”<sup>30</sup> However, Hegel only provides an extremely abstract explanation of how the object by itself links together chemical processes, sustains them and thereby passes over into purposive organic life. His explanation is merely that the chemical process makes all particular sensuous forms (colors, odors etc.) of the object lose the sense of objective intrinsic properties, which demonstrates that the individuality of the object is really constituted by the universal determination of the supersensory. But this universal determination acts as “the self-subsistent infinite form, the pure immaterial individuality.”<sup>31</sup> In the chemical process, it is still only presented in pieces, so it is still only potential and not truly infinite.

But now since the chemical process precisely represents the dialectic through which all the particular properties of bodies are brought to destruction [...] The chemical process is the highest to which inorganic nature can reach; in it she destroys herself and demonstrates her truth to be the infinite form alone.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, Hegel’s explanation here merely borrows the supersensuous nature of the chemical process to demonstrate that process which he already presupposed, the becoming-objective of the concept itself. Without this immanent process that he stuffed into the objective world beforehand, he would not be able to explain how the chemical process enables those disparate and fragmentary reactions to link together into a coherent pattern that attains self-maintenance and continually pulls itself back together. Of course, how chemism ultimately transitions to life is a problem that for natural science still remains unsolved up to this very day, so it was certainly much less possible to explain it during Hegel’s age. But he does not seem to leave room for the development of the natural sciences in this regard. In his view, this problem is already sufficiently solved by the omnipresent conceptual substance’s own inner activity and self-determination; or to be more precise, how chemism passes over into life basically is no problem for him at all. What he wants to explain instead is the inverse problem, namely, how does the concept of life condescend to express itself in the form of chemism and mechanism at inferior stages? Hegel’s consistently inverted perspective shows forth here as well.

Hegel, however, addresses from this holistic and macroscopic standpoint the long-standing opposition between the mechanistic and the purposive since Aristotle, which may still hold inspiring lessons for natural science. From Hegel’s point of view, as natural necessity, chemism does not transcend the category of mechanism; chemism stands together with mechanism in opposition to the concept of purposive freedom, but this relationship of opposition is not one of symmetrical parallels, because mechanism (and chemism) cannot contain the purposive, but the purposive can contain mechanism in itself and can find expression in the tendency of all mechanics toward totality. The purposive should therefore be a higher principle. “Mechanics thus reveals itself to be a striving for totality by the very fact that it seeks to comprehend nature

by itself as a whole that has no need of an other for its concept.”<sup>33</sup> Modern natural science and “cosmology” have become increasingly conscious of how intrinsically connected the overall model of the universe is to the origins of life and the mysteries of the organism. If we do not update many of our basic everyday concepts like causality and time from a holistic perspective, even if we unravel the mystery of the building of organic life through chemical analysis, we still cannot unravel the mystery of living movement. The second law of thermodynamics prompted people to think about the “whole” universe from the perspective of mechanics, resulting in the finding that “there may be some connection between initial conditions, expansion of external space, thermodynamics and origin of life.”<sup>34</sup> This connection usually boils down to the anisotropy of time (or “the arrow of time”). In mechanistic mechanics, time is in principle isotropic and reversible. A mechanical process can go in the reverse direction. In statistical mechanics, motion in a closed system always tends toward equilibrium or increasing entropy. This direction is irreversible. Another manifestation of time’s irreversibility is the “arrow of history,” which includes “those processes that generate information in open systems. These processes are at the center of all biological processes, and they play an indispensable role in growth, biological evolution, and in memory and conscious phenomena.”<sup>35</sup> Jacques Monod has tried to unify these two inverse arrows of time:

The evolution of the biological world must be an irreversible process in the direction of time; this direction is the same as the law of entropy increasing. That is, it moves in the same direction as the second law of thermodynamics [...] It is quite possible to regard the irreversibility of evolution as a manifestation of the second law in the biological world.<sup>36</sup>

Opposing this is the viewpoint of Hans Reichenbach who attributes both the second law of thermodynamics and evolution to causality. He argues that Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection is a tool for the conversion of evolutionary teleology into causality.<sup>37</sup> In response, Beauregard criticizes Reichenbach for failing to see the need to include human consciousness in our explanation of the flow of time.<sup>38</sup> Actually, the flow of time is not a thing, for it is only meaningful with respect to the subject’s self-centered expectation. Aside from observational perception, the subject also has perception of will. The reason why people tend to always explain everything by way of causality is “observation is easy and action is painful.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, passive observation does not require one to invest oneself. Perception of will requires exertion of the mind. The theoretical basis of this statement by Olivier Costa de Beauregard is, of course, Albert Einstein’s conception of the relativity of space–time, but it is also adjacent to Hegel’s dialectic, which champions the subject’s activity and speculation. This is reminiscent of Dieter Henrich’s famous statement: “Whoever wants to understand Hegel can only do so through himself.” There is no way to understand the arrow of cosmic time

and the teleology of life by lazily observing in passive fashion. If humans are to understand the mystery of their existence and what makes them human, they must understand it as the human being. That is, they must actively and creatively set out to understand it. "Life, therefore, can be grasped only speculatively; for it is precisely in life that the speculative has an existence."<sup>40</sup>

For this reason, when Hegel transitions from chemism to organic purposiveness, he appeals to the metaphor of "fire" (this is an example commonly used in the second law of thermodynamics: after it burns to ash, it cannot reignite again) and the irreversibility of time. He seems to have found the key to the problem in the following:

The moments of what exists are themselves raised to this ideality, have only this being of ideality, and do not fall back into the restricted forms of existence: we thus have objective time, an imperishable Fire, the Fire of Life; Heraclitus, too, declared the soul to be Fire, and the dry souls to be the best.<sup>41</sup>

It is not difficult to see that Hegel's entire dialectic is intimately connected to the concept of time. Time is coming into being and ceasing to be. Time is "becoming"; not only becoming but also negation and the negation of the negation. It is "Chronos, from whom everything is born and by whom its offspring is destroyed" (The god of creation and destruction that devoured his children in Greek mythology).

The Notion, however, in its freely self-existent identity as  $I = I$ , is in and for itself absolute negativity and freedom. Time, therefore, has no power over the Notion, nor is the Notion in time or temporal; on the contrary, it is the power over time, which is this negativity only qua externality.<sup>42</sup>

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel also says of life that it is "the simple essence of time,"<sup>43</sup> and that time is an "intuitive concept."<sup>44</sup> However, unlike the modern concept of time in thermodynamics, Hegel does not recognize that there is any temporal development in nature itself; even for living organisms, he only acknowledges that individuals have temporal development, but does not acknowledge that species and classes evolve in time. Thus, he insists that "in nature there is nothing new under the sun," and there is "nothing more than an eternally repeated cycle."<sup>45</sup> Actually, his concept of irreversible time ("development") is reserved exclusively for spirit, thought, and the concept, while nature itself is seen as isotropic in time. Therefore, he does not think seriously about how nature itself developed organisms from itself, but instead only considers how the concept of nature lifts itself up from sinking and shines forth as organic process.

Hegel insists that the concept "awakens" in nature and rises to purposiveness, but at first it still cannot free itself from its externality. At this moment it is only "external purposiveness." Hegel praises Kant's *Critique of Judgment*,

insisting that “one of Kant’s greatest services to philosophy was in drawing the distinction between relative or external purposiveness and internal purposiveness; in the latter he opened up the concept of life, the idea.”<sup>46</sup> Throughout the “objectivity” stage, Hegel’s main discussion is external purposiveness, until he advances to internal purposiveness, which is the stage of the concept of “life.” In his view, the concept of life is higher than the concept of purposiveness and organicism, for it carries metaphysical importance, but the concept of life develops itself out of external purposiveness. Purposiveness as pure objectivity is still external. Although it is already more advanced than both mechanism and chemism and expresses itself as the principle of unifying concrete diversity in and for itself, its content is always limited and trivial; it is external to the object, so it is not sufficient to unify the object. Purposiveness subordinates mechanical causality to itself. However, causality is indifferent to this subordination and it only passively becomes the means to the end, which generates a contradiction of subjective purpose and objective means. The subjective purpose is first and foremost “an essential striving and impulse to posit itself externally.”<sup>47</sup> It is by its very nature such a causality, that the (subjective) cause is (should be) its (objective) effect. So the purpose attains its own concept in objectivity,<sup>48</sup> but it attains this identity of cause and effect through a negation of itself. Subjective purpose is therefore the purpose because it has to objectively realize itself and thereby negate itself and go beyond its subjectivity; thus, the purposive is not just a subjective “reflective judgment” as Kant puts it, but a “deduction” from subjective to objective. The middle term of this syllogism is the means. The means is itself an immediate object like other objects, but it is formally taken by subjective purpose for its own means and has the determination of externally corresponding to the purpose. In this way, the means as the middle term of the syllogism by itself reflects the totality of the syllogism of purpose: On the one hand, it is connected with subjective purposes and performs activities on behalf of the subject. On the other hand, it represents the object and submits to this activity. It shows in the means that “purpose is the subjectivity or soul of the object that has in the latter its external side.”<sup>49</sup> This immediate connection of purpose and means is still external, and although this a shortcoming of external purposiveness, it also constitutes a necessary stage at which this externality also proves to its advantage, because in this way, the subjective purpose may no longer just be a simple internal impulsive tendency and instead may come into possession of its own objective means. It truly becomes an “activity” that is exhibited outside in actuality. Only in this way does it earn the hope of becoming the “realized purpose.”

Therefore, although the realized purpose is itself an immediate connection posited between the purpose and the object, this immediate connection is posited by inserting another object (means) between the purpose and the object, which is “the trick of reason” (*die List der Vernunft*). The trick of reason is a mediation. That is, the purpose transcends the object. As an external unity, it makes one object act on another object and makes them

consume each other, while it maintains its own consistency through them and actualizes itself. This immediate connection consists of two immediate connections, that is, the two premises of the syllogism of purpose. The first is the immediate connection of purpose and means. The means is the “self-reflection” of the purpose. That is, the purpose contains in itself a consideration of the external means. However, this consideration is only for the purpose of subsuming the means and returning to their very purpose. The second is the immediate connection of means and external objects. Means, like other objects, are mechanical or chemical objects. They are indifferent to the purposeful activity and its determinations. However, such activity is arranged to be beneficial to the purpose. In the meantime, the purpose is reflected in the middle term as the unity of the means and its objects. Thus, their immediate connection only indicates that the objects have returned “through themselves” (one object through another object) back into the purpose. “The negative attitude of the purposeful activity towards the object is therefore not an external attitude but, on the contrary, the objectivity’s own alteration and internal transition into it.”<sup>50</sup> The trick of reason is combining the two above-mentioned immediate connections into a mediating connection through the middle term (means), and because of the immediacy of the first two connections, this mediating connection reverts back to immediacy. In this way, it makes the effect and the cause become immediate identity. The purpose is identical to the realized purpose. In its objective process, the object itself unknowingly and immediately becomes something that conforms to the concept (purpose).

However, this process is still manipulated by an external purpose. This external purpose is only finite by virtue of its externality and is not in essence rational. Therefore, its realization is always relative insofar as it is always used as a means of another purpose’s realization. For example, one person’s finite purpose is always used by another person’s finite purpose because this finite purpose itself also obeys the laws of nature, so it can be used as an objective means. Comparatively speaking, the means as such is something rational:

To this extent the means is higher than the finite purposes of external purposiveness: the plough is more honorable than are immediately the enjoyments which it procures and which are the purposes. The tool lasts while the immediate enjoyments pass away and are forgotten. It is in their tools that human beings possess power over external nature, even though with respect to their purposes they are subjected to it.<sup>51</sup>

Lenin greatly appreciated this passage, calling it “the germs of historical materialism in Hegel,”<sup>52</sup> because it shows that the objective process of the objective world (human history) is not found in what people want to pursue subjectively, but in what they are doing objectively. Of course, such objective activity also contains subjective purposes, or in other words, there is no objective activity without subjective purposes; but it is the objective activity

itself that forms the historical continuity and intrinsic law-abiding regularity (rationality).

But Hegel insists that the external purpose, although finite in content and external, as a form of purpose, ultimately expresses the infinity of the concept, insofar as those indifferent mechanical and chemical objects have been organized into a unified whole and the free concept has been reflected in the identity of cause and effect along with the identity of purpose and realized purpose. The concept passes over into objectivity in the purposive process; it is no longer suspended above the object (as in mechanism and chemism). Instead, it already runs throughout the totality of objects as the form, so it expresses the concrete unity "that unites different connections and determinacies within itself."<sup>53</sup> But Hegel also points out that such uniting, whether with respect to the subjective purpose uniting the means or with respect to the means connecting to external objects, is always posited in "pre-supposing" and assuming beforehand that they are all immediate connections ready-made; but upon closer look, this assumption is untenable and will most certainly fall into infinite progress. For example, if a person can master a machine, he must first master the tools for manufacturing and repairing the machine, and if he wants to master these tools, he must first create other tools. Another example is if a person can use a tool to act on an object, there must be the external environment or conditions for such action, and to create these conditions, there must be other conditions, and so on. Therefore, every external purposeful activity is premised on certain preexisting unexamined conditions: "ought to be so" becomes "must be so," and the purpose itself becomes a means. As in "the formal syllogism,"

since the premises already presuppose the conclusion, the latter can only be imperfect. In such a product itself, therefore, only a means has been derived, not a realized purpose; or again: purpose has not truly attained any objectivity in it.<sup>54</sup>

The real purpose is still hidden and does not present itself in the purposive activity. For instance, people chasing after profit and fame day after day is purposive activity that does not express the real reason why or what for. Here, all that is being pursued is immediately consumed as the means of another purpose, just so that it becomes consumed as the means of pursuing another purpose. "The result now is that external purposiveness, which only has so far the form of teleology, only goes so far as to be a means, not to be an objective purpose."<sup>55</sup>

However, in Hegel's view, the internal purposiveness and objective purpose are already there potentially in this external purposiveness. A person must first grasp the means to realize it, and this progression of the bad infinite can be sublated by the concept of the process of mastering all means, which is to say, no matter how human beings master the means as an actual process, human beings can generally master the means, which by itself illustrates that



the externality of the means is only “an unessential reflective shine.” “The activity of the purpose truly is, therefore, only the exposure of this reflective shine and the sublation of it.”<sup>56</sup> Although the means must be presupposed, it is always posited as a moment of the purpose, and its objective externality is always seen as sublated. This shows that purposiveness, which is originally added to the means and objective objects as an external and formal determination, is actually the indivisible intrinsic nature of the object itself. “[B]ecause the concept, as purpose, is realized therein, this is only the manifestation of its own inner dimension. The objectivity is thus as it were only a hull under which the concept lies hidden.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, in all purposive activities, the purpose never ceases to be realized; however, this purpose is not the subjective, finite and external purpose, but is instead the internal purpose of the activity of the objective thing, the absolute good, the life of all that is, the Idea. Even when people think that their purpose is still unrealized, they have already realized that objective purpose. The objective purpose is always stimulating the continuous efforts of human beings to realize themselves with this illusion.<sup>58</sup> For the person, this internal purpose is individual life. For example, as long as a person engages in a purposive activity, they develop their life no matter how much success or failure results. In this regard, a person is always “successful” because she immediately carries out her objective purpose, namely, to freely live as human. As far as human beings are concerned, the death of an individual also completes the living development of the entire genus and goes beyond life into cognition, then rises to the highest level of absolute purposiveness, which is God’s self-knowing.

Such an immanent purposive movement manifests as a complex two-fold connection before it reaches its ultimate absolute purpose, that is, the connection of interweaving external purposiveness and internal purposiveness together.

In the concept taken for itself, that is, in its subjectivity, the difference of itself from itself is as an immediate identical totality on its own; but since its determinateness here is indifferent externality, its self-identity is in this externality immediately also self-repulsion again, so that what is determined as external and indifferent to the identity is rather this identity itself, and the identity as identity, as self-reflected, is rather its other. Only by firmly attending to this shall we comprehend the objective turning back of the concept into itself, that is, its true objectification.<sup>59</sup>

Internal purposiveness is not retreating back into the inner mind, and external purposiveness is not sinking back down into material desire. Internal purpose manifests as self-repulsion and outward striving, as well as the concern for the external means of actuality, because it believes that the objective externality of the external means is an illusion to be sublated; if it does not sublimate this illusion, “the subjectivity of the finite concept, by contemptuously rejecting the means, has attained nothing better in its goal.”<sup>60</sup> Modern anthropologists



also point out that the fundamental difference between the purposive activity of humans and those of other animals (such as higher primates) is found in the perpetual concern with tools. Tools are an essential moment in human activity; they are inseparable components of human activity and even an integral part of the human body. Therefore, people always carry tools with them, prepared for use. In contrast, chimpanzees sometimes make tools, but the tool is always something external to them. Once the goal is achieved, the tool is discarded. Therefore, whether to incorporate the tool into the subject itself as an internal moment (and thus as an ideal, universal and necessary moment of spirit) is what fundamentally differentiates human purposive activity (labor) and the instinctual activity of other animals. As I have said elsewhere:

When primitive human beings carried heavy tools from one place to another, they had to spend more physical energy that would remain temporarily uncompensated. The reason why humans could do this is because people have a strong sense of purpose with respect to their labor activities, a certain degree of understanding of the impact of their actions on nature and the relationship between natural objects. There is also fantasy and religious passion that permeates consciousness of the tool as well, especially the emotional connection humans have to the tools they often use (often regarding it as a partner and another “self”).<sup>61</sup>

This intrinsic, spiritual connection of human beings to tools can only be the product of society or “genus” in essence, which, as the relationship between one self and another self, is precisely the reflective shine through the interpersonal relation in the activity of the human subject. The person reflects the genus, because the genus happens to be the inner essence of each person. What makes the human being human is that the human being shares a social relation with herself, a relation that is reflected in the fact that she treats all of her subject matters (whether the subject matter is really another person or just a tool, a product or object of labor) as identical with herself. As Hegel says about self-consciousness:

The I is the content of the relation and the relating itself. It is in confronting an other that the I is itself. At the same time, it reaches out over and beyond this other, which, for the I, is likewise only itself.<sup>62</sup>

In fact, self-consciousness is not the abstract property of the singular human being, but a social consciousness embodied in the individual. That is, one regards oneself as an object or “other,” which at the same time is regarded as oneself. When a person sees herself as an other, she is immediately “repelling herself” in self-identity, so that she can design herself, control herself, spur herself on, use herself as a means of interacting with the outside world, and of producing the objectification of herself and the becoming-other of herself. At this moment, she presents “external purposiveness,” that

is, outward and active enterprises; uses the means to acquire purpose; and uses the purpose as a means of further acquisition. When one sees an other as oneself, one returns from the external otherness to one's own identity, and since this identity is a return from the other, it is no longer just a potential identity internal to the subject but an objective identity that has been realized. This return is manifested as objective, "internal" purpose, that is, the internal sustaining of one's own activity, life and process of development. It is no longer simply an outward enterprising (in extension), but is now a deepening of the inside, the tapping and unfolding of human potential or essential power, the process of freely elevating human life from a lower-level form to a high-level form. Of course, the latter process (internal purposiveness) is premised on the former process (external purposiveness). The improvement of the human being's capacities is premised on the development of production, industry, technology and scientific knowledge, but external purposive activity only has at the very most a form conforming to purposes; at the very best it can only reach the means. True purposiveness must be internal, for only internal purposiveness can explain the whole purpose of human activity, such as the evolution of civilization and culture. That is to say, all human activity is only for the improvement of the human being as the end in-itself. To change, master and control objects is for the sake of making the object and the whole of nature a humanized "inorganic body," which is nothing more or less than developing the subject. Therefore, from this point of view, internal purposiveness is more the premise of external purposiveness than the other way around. As purposive, external purposiveness is based on the primitive impulse of individual life to assimilate the external objective world, to recharge and to perfect our original impulse. External purposiveness only becomes the premise of internal purposiveness as mechanics and chemistry, that is, as technical means. Internal purposiveness becomes the premise of external purposiveness insofar as it alone is the true purposiveness that is the ultimate absolute purpose. Hegel's doctrine of internal purposiveness undoubtedly contains the seeds of an extremely profound humanism and historical materialism.

However, Hegel also insists that as pure natural life, internal purposiveness is always interwoven with and submerged in external purposiveness. Human beings cannot attain consciousness of the purpose inside of their own spirit, and conversely equate human purpose with animal purpose, which makes human life itself worthy only as a means; but in addition to natural life, the human being also has "spiritual life," that is, spirit (because spirit is essentially living). Thus, natural life and spiritual life are in a relationship of external purposiveness:

Thus life as such is for spirit in one respect a means, and then spirit holds it over against itself; in another respect, spirit is an individual, and then life is its body; in yet another respect, this unity of spirit and its living corporeality is born of spirit into ideality.<sup>63</sup>

Hegel here seems to allude to Friedrich von Schiller's doctrine, which unifies sensuous and rational impulses into living forms (beauty), which, nevertheless, Hegel argues, do not sufficiently reflect the self-development and freedom of life, but always fall into contingency and external necessity in the objective aspect of life and slip right into the abstractness and singularity in the subjective aspect of life. In his view, true internal purposiveness alone can be the idea of life:

The idea of life by itself is free from both the conditioning objectivity presupposed in the first case and the reference to subjectivity of the second case [...] It is in and for itself absolute universality; the objectivity which it possesses is throughout permeated by the concept, and this concept alone it has as substance.<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, it is the objective and logical meaning of life that transcends human life (although it is also reflected in human life); it is the ontological or substantiated concept, that is, the soul of the world, the essence of God or the infinite life of God itself:

But this simple life is not only omnipresent; it is the one and only subsistence and immanent substance of its objectivity; but as subjective substance it is impulse, more precisely the specific impulse of particular difference, and no less essentially the one and universal impulse of the specific that leads its particularization back to unity and holds it there.<sup>65</sup>

Here, we clearly see how spirit freed from nature unites with metaphysically disguised nature that is freed from humanity by being metaphysically disguised, a real human being and real humanity, to use Marx's words.

Thus, Hegel logically deduces the active subject, that is, the idea of life as absolute inner purpose, from objective nature itself (in fact, from the concept of nature). At the same time, the Idea of this subject's life is proven to be objective substance by this deduction. Namely, it is proven to be the substance inside of objective nature. It is that "concept" (*Begriff*) that transforms into a noun from a verb and becomes the inner substance and motivation of all things, the inner substance as motivation and the motivating power as the inner substance.

There is, however, still a problem of principle here. If this question is not clarified, the whole of Hegel's deduction becomes incomprehensible. This is the question of what purposiveness means in the precise sense that Hegel uses it. Hegel's entire philosophy can be viewed as a vast system of purposes. I pointed out earlier (Volume 2, Part 1, Chapter 2) that what Hegel calls purposiveness is a unique kind of causality, in which the cause is the effect; the cause is the ideal form of the effect and the effect is the actual form of the cause. It is in fact Aristotle who originally proposes this understanding in the history of Western philosophy. Aristotle distinguishes between "moving cause"

and “final cause” (ultimate end) and subordinates the former to the latter. In his opinion, all process of movement (including mechanical movements) has a final cause because motion is nothing more than the process of actualizing potential things. *δυναμι* (potentiality) and *ενεργεια* (actuality) are the most important pair of categories that Hegel takes from Aristotle. They are essentially related to a range of other categories in Hegel. To illustrate this pair of categories, Hegel’s most common examples are seeds and plants:

For example, the plant develops itself out of its seed. This seed contains the entire plant in itself already, but in an ideal manner and so one should not construe its development as if the various parts of the plant, root, stem, leaves, and so forth were already really in the seed yet merely in utterly miniature fashion. This is the so-called “Chinese box hypothesis,” the deficiency of which consists in the fact that what is only on hand initially in an ideal manner is considered as already concretely existing. What is right in this hypothesis is, by contrast, this: that the concept, in its process, remains with itself and that nothing new is posited by this means with respect to the content. Instead only an alteration of form is brought forth.<sup>66</sup>

The “Chinese box hypothesis” or “preformation,” is a view of biological inheritance proposed by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Observing the sperm of animals and humans via the newly invented microscope, people at the time began portraying the sperm as microscopic human beings who have not yet grown up. Consistent with the “theory of innate ideas” in epistemology, this viewpoint can be traced back to Plato’s Theory of Reminiscence. However, Leibniz’s epistemology is not an extreme transcendentalism. The “marbling theory” that he proposes is a reconciliation of “preformation” and “gradual formation” (blank-slate theory). In other words, he does not deny the initiating effect of acquired experience on cognitive potential. In this regard, Hegel’s concept of purposiveness is more similar to Leibniz’s marbling theory.

All these metaphors have yet to explain what exactly “potential” or “potentiality” is and what is actualized. How could we know that potentiality is in something when still unactualized? When it is actualized, how does one know that it is identical to the original potential, the actualization of which it is? Starting from Hegel’s premise, the answer is very simple. He does not need to explain the process of how things in nature (such as plants) potentially exist and how they are actualized from the natural perspective of development, but only needs to appeal to the concept and thought, that returning-to-self that everyone can experience. Looking back at the course of the concept’s movement from this perspective, it is natural to understand as follows: Of course, the potentiality will not know its own potential when still unactualized. It only exists in-itself; only when it actualizes itself (being-for-itself) does it come to know that it originally already existed in potential form. This process of actualization by itself can demonstrate that the actualized is not only

different from the original potential but is also identical to it. In other words, actualization is the contradictory process between this difference and identity. Finally, potential in the epistemological sense is the same as potential in the ontological sense because the essence of the movement and development of everything is the process of the concept knowing itself. With respect to such problems, Plato's theory of reminiscence is perhaps more appropriate at least in a metaphorical way for Hegel. The metaphor of seed and plant is frequently used only to express the objectivity of the purposive connection and to avoid subjectivity. Plato argues that in the process of learning, people find that what they have learned is essentially only what they already knew all along, so all learning is nothing but remembering. This view finds representation in modern times by Noam Chomsky's transformational generative grammar. Chomsky argues that people have a natural ability to create and generate new language. For example, children can use learned vocabulary and rules to speak new sentences that they have never heard before. These sentences can be regarded as a transformation or deformation of the innate grammatical structure in his mind. These theories are certainly problematic as philosophical explanations, but they are true as an empirical description, and everyone can experience these as fact: learning is not just about reading and attending school but also encourages thinking about it, not only to enrich oneself to feed one's growth as well.

However, these easy-to-understand facts are expedient for explaining the human being's purposive activity simply for the reason that the human being maintains a consistent personality throughout all of her activities. Human memory and prediction have already broken free from the model of animal reflection and have risen to the universality of personality and thus to spirituality. When Hegel stretches the human being's own personality to analogically speak of all natural things, he makes the biggest mistake. However, could we because of this mistake completely strip away this internal experience of the human being from objective things and view the teleological conception of nature as the anthropological misunderstandings of humankind at its immature stage? Does one still need Occam's razor today to shave off all of the "hidden properties" (as the Scholastics would refer to Aristotelian "potentialities") added onto mechanical causality? G. Miller believes that Hegel often uses a mysterious anthropomorphic language borrowed from Christianity and that this language does not conform to his *Logic*, so it causes confusion. Agreeing with Irwin Edman, he thinks that if Hegel had unyieldingly upheld the non-individual term "absolute" without anthropomorphizing it, he would not have muddled up the clarity of his thought with mysterious idols.<sup>67</sup> However, some think that although Hegel's anthropomorphism gets mixed up with Christian mysticism, it does not have to be this way. Gadamer argues:

Our understanding of the world will not cease to judge "teleologically."  
For us, and not only for Hegel, the transition here is necessary, i.e., the

progression to another, higher form of knowing as well as to a higher form of what is known. Indeed, in a decisive sense, that which we look upon as living we must view as a self [...] The mode of being of what lives corresponds in this to the mode of being of the knowledge which understands what lives.<sup>68</sup>

For however far modern physiology might go in unlocking the secret of organic life, in knowing what lives we will never cease to make a turnabout in our thinking of that which, as the play of forces, lawfully determines organic nature: we will think of it, conversely, as the behavior of the organism.<sup>69</sup>

That is the true penetration into the interior of nature, which alone is able to grasp the “natural” in nature, i.e., its life. The living feels the living-it understands it from the inside as it understands itself as a self.<sup>70</sup>

People ordinarily argue that Galileo’s experiments with falling bodies once and for all eliminated Aristotle’s errors, but modern physics shows that people’s “potential” for something objective is far from being fully understood. Of course, people today do not regard the mechanical displacement of an object as the “effort” of the object itself. People are exploring the potential of the entire universe. Through huge astronomical telescopes, scientists are looking for the “memory” of the universe, because light and radio waves have been measured as having been transmitted from those distant celestial bodies billions of years ago. People are also predicting the future of the universe, the decline and “death” of the universe. These predictions are based on treating the universe as an organic whole and independent system similar to a “personality.” Of course, these discussions are not strictly pure science, but they are philosophical, because the so-called “whole” universe can only be a philosophical postulate, not a physical or astronomical hypothesis. If philosophers and physicists are still associated with the old God, then we do not need to blame Hegel for anthropomorphic explanations of “objective purpose.” We will find that when natural science involves itself in philosophical issues, “anthropomorphic” terms and interpretations are almost inevitable. The term “teleology” is anthropomorphic in itself. Norbert Wiener wanted to replace it with concepts such as “development” and “progress” to avoid anthropomorphism, but he did not notice that these concepts can only be understood anthropomorphically, and even worse than “teleology,” they also carry a more obvious ethical color. It is also rarely noticed that even when materialists say that “movement comes from inside the material,” there is already an anthropomorphism at play, because for each concrete material, what we call “internal” is only relative. Only human beings and personalities have a true “internal” dimension; as for the interior of the entire material world (universe), it loses meaning because the material world is infinite, insofar as what is infinite is boundless, and how could the distinction of inside and outside hold without boundaries?

In this way, as long as people acknowledge that natural science cannot take leave of philosophy, anthropomorphism seems to be the fate of human

thinking. Of course, it is one thing for people to understand and grasp the objective world through anthropomorphic terms. After all, it is one thing to know and grasp the objective world through anthropomorphism and another thing altogether whether or not the objective world itself exists in the manner that such anthropomorphic terms describe. However, the anthropomorphic manner of cognition does indeed express the following naive belief that human beings have: the laws of the objective world and the laws of human thinking are essentially identical laws. Since the terminology used in physics, even those basic concepts used in mechanistic mechanics, such as force, energy, inertia and so on, were originally anthropomorphic (from the words for human strength, talent, laziness etc.),<sup>71</sup> why cannot today's anthropomorphic concepts (teleology, life etc.) become scientific concepts? The problem is that we are never content with such anthropomorphic analogies, but must proceed from them as guiding threads and delve deeper into the concrete internal processes and complex connections of objective things. Just as we no longer understand "force" as just the "strength" of human muscles, and "heat" as the warmth people feel, we can no longer understand "teleology" simply as conscious activity, but must expand it to cover a systemic process in which the entire physical world is tirelessly fluctuating, producing and reproducing life, but returning to itself. In this way, the subjective dialectical view of the world can become an ontological worldview, and the dialectics of nature—despite its extensive challenges in modern times—can have its own solid theoretical foundation.

Hegel's immortal merit is that he (although from the idealist standpoint) profoundly demonstrates that the dialectical view of the world can only be truly understood and grasped on the basis of the subjective standpoint of the person. As long as the human being sees herself, conversely, as the existence of free subjectivity, she has the power to break the false mask of nature's "inhumanity," resonate with the deeper essence of nature's "self-movement" and fuse with it into one subject-substance or subject-object totality. Hegel's mistake is that he understands human subjective activity as abstract conceptual activity, the activity of thinking. His understanding of the inner substance of the world and of nature thus becomes that of the existence of the metaphysical Idea. Only Marx's practical materialism provides people with a truly realistic basis for scientifically understanding the objective world and humanity itself.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel himself does not seem to have used the term "dialectics of nature," but he undoubtedly wished to reveal dialectics from nature.
- 2 See "Hegel's Application of the Purposive," in (Philosophy Department of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. 1986, 106). Findlay here is at least much more correct than Henrich Schulz, who argues in (Schulz 1921, 38) that Hegel's philosophy of nature is a concept game that will never be taken seriously ever again, for it can



only serve to prove that a great character will not be satisfied with small mistakes when he makes mistakes.

- 3 Hegel 2010, 632.
- 4 Lenin 1976, 38.
- 5 Hegel 2010, 632.
- 6 Ibid., 634.
- 7 Ibid., 635.
- 8 Ibid., 637.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid., 639.
- 11 One cannot completely break free of mechanism simply by affirming “movement is the inner essence of the objective world,” because for everything concrete in this world, movement may still be regarded as external impetus, and this does not prevent us from considering, like Leucippus, movement as the natural condition and intrinsic property of the objective world.
- 12 Hegel 2010, 641.
- 13 Ibid., 642.
- 14 Ibid., 643.
- 15 Engels 1960, 65. Engels also states: “Where there is attraction, it must be complemented by repulsion. Hence already Hegel was quite right in saying that the essence of matter is attraction and repulsion.” “Hegel shows his genius even in the fact that he derives attraction as something secondary from repulsion as something preceding it (Engels 1960, 523, 532).
- 16 Engels 1960, 65.
- 17 Hegel 1995, 63.
- 18 Ibid., 63–4.
- 19 Epicurus generally denies that the concept, the universal, is the essence. See (Hegel 1994, 63).
- 20 Hegel 2010, 643.
- 21 Ibid., 643.
- 22 Ibid., 646.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid., 649.
- 25 Hegel 1970, 269.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid., 271.
- 28 Ibid., 257.
- 29 Ibid., 270.
- 30 Ibid., 269.
- 31 Ibid., 271.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Hegel 2010, 652.
- 34 Gallur 1976, 20.
- 35 Lei 1976, 26.
- 36 Monod 1975, 219.
- 37 Monod 1983, 153.
- 38 “The Problem of Irreversibility,” in (Extracts 1976, 71).
- 39 Ibid., 77.
- 40 Hegel 1970, 272.



- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., 35.
- 43 Hegel 2018, 104.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Hegel 1988, 57.
- 46 Hegel 2010, 654.
- 47 Ibid., 657.
- 48 Ibid., 652.
- 49 Ibid., 661.
- 50 Ibid., 662.
- 51 Ibid., 663.
- 52 Lenin 1976, 189.
- 53 Hegel 2010, 665.
- 54 Ibid., 92.
- 55 Ibid., 666.
- 56 Ibid., 667.
- 57 Hegel 1991, 282
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Hegel 2010, 668.
- 60 Ibid., 669.
- 61 Deng & Yi 1989, 407.
- 62 Hegel 2018, 102.
- 63 Hegel 2010, 677.
- 64 Ibid., 99.
- 65 Ibid., 678.
- 66 Hegel 1991, 234.
- 67 Miller, G. "The Interdependence of Phenomenology, Logic and Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences," in (Philosophy Department of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 1986, 193).
- 68 Gadamer 1976, 52–3.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid., 42.
- 71 See Dampier, W. *History of Science*, Commercial Press, 1975, p. 230.

## 9 The agreement of dialectical ontology with logic

As mentioned earlier, Hegel reaches the agreement of *Logic* with ontology through the mediation of epistemology, and more concretely, through the subjective moment of practice in epistemology. So when Hegel declares “everything is a syllogism,”<sup>1</sup> this cannot be seen simply as a rationalist dogma, because the ground of this assertion is positioned in the human being’s purposeful or practical activity. In Hegel’s view, practice is not only the natural or necessary extension of the human being’s subjective concept, but is itself an activity of thought and syllogizing conforming to logic. Conversely, thinking is already in relation to the actual at the stage of the syllogism and even at the stage of judgment; it is already a practical activity.<sup>2</sup> Lenin fully appreciates the significance of this logical conception of practice in Hegel from an epistemological perspective:

When Hegel endeavours—sometimes even huffs and puffs—to bring man’s purposive activity under the categories of logic, saying that this activity is the “syllogism” (Schlu?), that the subject “(man) plays the role of a ‘member’ in the logical ‘figure’ of the ‘syllogism’ and so on,—THEN THAT IS NOT MERELY STRETCHING A POINT, A MERE GAME. THIS HAS A VERY PROFOUND, PURELY MATERIALISTIC CONTENT. It has to be inverted: the practical activity of man had to lead his consciousness to the repetition of the various logical figures thousands of millions of times in order that these figures could obtain the significance of axioms.<sup>3</sup>

He also states: “The ‘syllogism of action’ [...] For Hegel action, practice, is a logical syllogism, a figure of logic. And that is true!”<sup>4</sup> What Lenin emphasizes is that the logic of human thinking acquires its own objective truth through practice. Following Lenin’s thought, we can immediately come to such a belief: the objective world exists objectively in the kind of relations that people understand in logical thinking. Humans have come to know this point not only because by way of mediating the connection between their thought and the objective world (being) their actions and practices have “exposed” the secrets of the objective world to them, but also more fundamentally

because human practice contains in itself the moments of objectivity being conquered, assimilated and made logical. Consequently, practice is not only the mediating bond that links the opposing sides of thinking and objective being, but also the immediate union of thinking and being. Some still overlook this point, but one thing is certain: when Lenin argues that “man’s practical activities must make man’s consciousness repeat billions of different logical cases,” “human consciousness” here does not mean consciousness outside of or after practice, but instead consciousness in practice. Practice is not a pure material process (muscular activity), but a conscious process of acting, so it is by nature logical in itself. In other words, practice possesses the twofold quality of being “immediate actuality” and “universality.” The unity of thinking and being, the transformation of “the thing in itself” into “the thing for me” is most immediately actualized in practical activity, in practical consciousness and assimilated objects. Therefore, from the perspective of Marxism, the foundation of philosophical ontology is practice, not “nature divorced from humanity.” The immediate identity of this logical and ontological nature of practice is well expressed by Boyer, who argues that: 1) practical reasoning is conditioned by the identity of logic and essence; practice first emerges (Hegel might say: is born) as a relation of beings and when it transforms into a logical relation, this relation of beings does not vanish but is instead logically *proven*; 2) what has been done in practice cannot simply be reversed or undone, and the revoking of this reasoning “in actuality” is no longer possible, for such reasoning can only be repeated, but in this way alone it earns the highest logical taste, along with a unique solidity and axiomatic quality; and this moment of irreversibility and axiomaticity can be said to be the essence of practical reasoning.<sup>5</sup> In abstract terms, or from the standpoint of natural science, the objective world already exists before human practice, but human practice as a sensuous material activity is in essence identical to this objective world; as a conscious, sensuous life activity, it is the only concrete subject matter of human thinking. The human being’s grasping of practical activity also comprises the objective moment of practice and consequently the grasping of the substance of the objective world; it also includes the human being’s acknowledgment of nature existing well before humanity and human practice. If the human being wishes to grasp the substance of the concrete world otherwise than through practice or outside of practice, conversely, nothing concrete could possibly come of it.

This thought of practical ontology is already comprised in Hegel in upside-down form. Hegel does not deny the fact that the human being comes from the natural world, but he mainly insists on the priority of thinking, creative activity and practical activity in logic. Nature must conform to the objective moment of practice, and therefore it must conform to the concept to be true; if nature is irreversible in time, this is just an external reflection of the logical irreversibility of thinking, of the activity of the concept or of practical

activity. As far as the development of social history is concerned, this is even more so the case for progress in the sphere of human spirit. Subject and object are logically unified in the practical activity of the concept—this is the ground of the *Logic*'s agreement with ontology in Hegel.

Fulda's attempt to describe Hegel's dialectical logic (in the broad sense) from the perspective of modern semantics is very valuable. However, Fulda ignores the important status and core role of the moment of practice in dialectical logic. Fulda opposes Hegel's *Logic* and the principle of immediacy (like "intellectual intuition") in Schelling and others, and tries to set aside ontology and the practical activity of the subject while exploring the rules of dialectical logic and the laws of movement from the perspective of logical form alone. In Fulda's opinion, there is a lot of evidence that Hegel believes that for speculative philosophy to complete reason's reconstruction of itself, it must leave the oppositions of consciousness behind it. Fulda goes on to argue that the thought that research on the *Logic* has liberated from the discussion of human subjectivity, has enabled the speculative logic unique to Hegel move forward in the development of modern thought, and that Hegel should be credited with revealing afresh from the starting point of the modern philosophy of subjectivity and its criticism that the significance and signifying relationships of those basic terms can be systematized without involving subjectivity, without involving what is unique to consciousness, including the opposition of the role of the subject and the intended object.<sup>6</sup> Fulda strips away from these relations the unity of thinking and being and of subject and object that Hegel is highlighting everywhere, transforming these relations into an abstract framework of pure logical relations that is neither that of thinking and being nor that of subject and object. Fulda argues that the task of dialectical logic can currently only be examined in the framework of a general theory of meaning.<sup>7</sup> So how do we examine dialectical logic without involving subjectivity and the subject's relationship to the object? Fulda analyzes the ambiguity or vagueness (*Vagheit*) of dialectical terms and their implicit employment, but thinks that this is not implying an object or subject matter, but is instead implying another meaning. Thus, a modification of meaning (*Bedeutungsmodifikation*) takes place, which is always the development of the negation of the negation in the direction of its opposite. In Fulda's understanding, this presents itself in a regressive manner of demonstration and a conception of the whole. In this way, he argues one can briefly formulate the dialectic as a combination of self-support and self-refutation. This, in his opinion, corrects Hegel's self-understanding, that is, dogmatically bestowing upon dialectical logic ontological significance.<sup>8</sup> Although Fulda's analysis is meticulous enough, no one sees why there is any need to introduce a completely different kind of dialectical logic beyond the old formal logic, or what the relationship between these two kinds of logic is. People also do not know what use there is in such an unchanging logic that is divorced from the object.

Contrary to Fulda, there is another trend with respect to setting up an opposition between the dialectic and logic. P. Ruben suggests,

First of all, the terms "Logic" and "Dialectics" should be distinguished from each other—especially to clarify the content of *The Science of Logic*. Dialectics is not special logic, nor is it "higher" logic. On the other hand, logic is not dialectics, nor is it an expression of dialectics.<sup>9</sup>

In Ruben's view, the dialectic itself can only be philosophical epistemology and therefore ontology, but it cannot be logic. He argues Hegel holds the position of spontaneous materialism. As for the shortcomings of Hegel's dialectic, Ruben argues that in the eyes of Marx and Engels, the fundamental flaw of Hegel's theory of proof in the *Science of Logic* (referring to the deduction of the concrete from the abstract) must be regarded as a reversal of the order of concreteness and abstraction assumed by Hegel,<sup>10</sup> and that the truth is, however, that concreteness is the sufficient, but not necessary, condition of abstraction.<sup>11</sup> This is not only a misreading of Hegel's dialectic but also a departure from Marx and Engels's insight into scientific methodology. Ruben insists on the practical point of view, but deprives practice itself of logical significance, turning it into a limited intuitive activity, a blind activity without foresight.

This is made obvious by the very fact that this method is not something distinct from its subject matter and content—for it is the content in itself, the dialectic which it possesses within itself, which moves the subject matter forward. It is clear that no expositions can be accepted as scientifically valid that do not follow the progression of this method and are not in tune with its simple rhythm, for it is the course of the fact itself.<sup>12</sup>

Practice is practical because it involves both factors method and subject. These two factors become identical only in practice alone. Of course, Hegel's practice is itself only a part of his epistemology. Both the practical Idea and the theoretical Idea contain the two moments of impulse and rationality, but these two moments are related in different or even opposite ways in these two Ideas. In the practical Idea, it leads from rationality to impulse and action toward the outside world, deriving substance from logic, whereas in cognition, it returns from outward impulse to rationality, and from substance to logic. Practice embodies the innermost soul of the dialectic, that is, the dialectic of negativity:

Intelligence familiarizes itself with things, not of course in their sensuous existence, but by thinking them and positing their content in itself; and in, so to speak, adding form, universality, to the practical ideality which, by itself, is only negativity, it gives an affirmative character to the negativity of the singular. This universal aspect of things is not something subjective, something belonging to us: rather is it, in contrast to the transient phenomenon, the noumenon, the true, objective, actual nature of things themselves, like the Platonic Ideas.<sup>13</sup>

Practice is subjectivity actively negating the subjectivity of itself; however, since subjectivity is logical by nature, such an active negation is not a blind impulse but is carried out by a certain “method” in subjectivity’s own logical manner; it is the process of subjectivity determining the form of itself for itself (positive determination), and therefore the process by which the logical essence of subjectivity is externalized or actualized. This is why it is not so difficult to understand why Hegel calls practice and action a “syllogism.” Hegel’s dialectic must present the unity of logic and ontology, which it is, through the practical understanding of it. This understanding can be divided into the following three levels for examination.

### Freedom and necessity

The true essence of the practical relation is that between freedom and necessity. Since ancient Greece, traditional Western *logos*-ism has understood the laws of logic as necessity and irresistible destiny. The *nous* tradition, conversely, views freedom as contingent, arbitrary activity that cannot be determined by logic. The opposition between these two aspects reaches dialectical synthesis here for the first time. In Hegel, freedom is not a simple attribute intrinsically belonging to the subjective, but is rather an attribute of objective actuality. To be precise, freedom becomes the substance of the world, not just an attribute of the world. Hegel insists that the arbitrariness of subjective desire is by itself subject to objective laws. This abstract freedom is actually necessity, just following the form of “freedom.” True freedom is the kind of freedom that brings necessity into the relationship of purpose. Engels states,

Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the insight into necessity [*die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit*]. “Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood [*begriffen*].” Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. [...] therefore the freer a man’s judgment is in relation to a definite question.<sup>14</sup>

For this reason, freedom is necessary. In Hegel’s view, on the other hand, necessity must be free. True necessity is not a blind “fate” coming from outside of the human being, but a purposive process, which is the particularization inside of the subject itself:

Only self-consciousness has fate in a strict sense, because it is free, and therefore in the singularity of its “I” it absolutely exists in and for itself and can oppose itself to its objective universality and alienate itself from it. By this separation, however, it excites against itself the mechanical relation of a fate. Hence, for the latter to have violent power over it, it

must have given itself some determinateness or other over against the essential universality; it must have committed a deed.<sup>15</sup>

Starting from the immanent necessity of this self-consciousness and concept, we can think over that mechanical external necessity as “a rational fate, immanently determined,”<sup>16</sup> even a “free mechanics.”<sup>17</sup> So the true significance of Hegel’s concept of necessity is “that it be what it is by means of itself and thus mediated, to be sure, yet at the same time containing in itself the mediation as sublated.”<sup>18</sup> This determination is actually a determination of freedom (objective substantiality). Of course, such freedom can only be understood under some objective purpose or “God’s will.” Hegel, in fact, views objective necessity as a moment of (God’s) self-consciousness or purpose, which is intrinsically related to the teleological worldview of Christian theology. Hegel borrows this viewpoint to free subjectivity from the outer appearance of narrow personal finitude and to unify it with objective necessity.

The subjectivity is not merely the bad and finite subjectivity, standing opposite the basic matter; instead, it is, in keeping with its truth, immanent to the basic matter and, accordingly as infinite subjectivity, is the truth of the basic matter itself [...] because God himself is known [*gewußt*] here as the absolute subjectivity, and subjectivity contains in itself the aspect of particularity, our particularity is also by this means recognized, not merely as something that is to be abstractly denied, but at the same time as something to be preserved.<sup>19</sup>

Uniting freedom and necessity through the dialectical identity of God’s “infinite subjectivity” and the particularity of personal freedom is a major discovery made by Hegel in transforming Christian theology.

However, it is still worth considering how to accurately understand Hegel’s view on freedom and necessity. Many people, including Hegel’s opponents and proponents, understand this identity as if freedom “is nothing more than” doing things according to necessary law, while necessary law is itself immutable, a ready-made destiny that people have to accept. Thus, some people praise Hegel for this “materialist” idea, while others have criticized his “fatalist” tendencies. Indeed, if we first consider necessity as a ready-made external condition, people can only do something within the constraints of this condition, which of course cannot be said to be completely wrong, but this is only an abstract, one-sided view of the relationship between freedom and necessity. If it is considered the whole truth, it will inevitably lead to fatalism, which is the case of ancient Stoicism’s view of “freedom.” It has made people tolerate the unfreedom of reality in order to maintain abstract “freedom” of the inner mind. It has caused people to succumb to the whip of their masters and also to be proud of such total servility. If freedom is merely obedience to necessity, then it is no different from being in thrall to unfreedom. Hegel’s rational side is undeniable, but it also contains this mediocre side, especially



when he touts the Prussian state as the most reasonable and free political system. But he was not too superficial to figure out Stoic slavishness. His one-sidedness is a higher-level one-sidedness. Before criticizing this one-sidedness, let us take a look at what improvements he has made over his predecessors.

The problem is that when Hegel insists that true freedom is only found in obeying necessity, the necessity of which he speaks is the product of already “presupposing” necessity as freedom. In other words, such obedience is truly free only when the subject obeying necessity (the object) is precisely the subject obeying itself. True freedom can only be understood in connection with true necessity (i.e., “internal” necessity). If necessity is understood as a ready-made, external necessity, and an impersonal object, obedience to necessity is slavishness, not freedom. Therefore, necessity is not only the logical attribute of the objective substance, but is also the logical attribute of the subject’s activity. Freedom is not only the subjective subject but also the active substance of the objective world. In this sense, the subject’s free activity essentially conforms to logic and proceeds from the universality of logic, so it can objectify itself (and possess the universality of containing the object). Conversely, objective substance is in essence self-moving and free, so it can be identical with and agree with the subject’s activity on its own accord (rather than being subjectively forced). People cannot understand true freedom without objective and necessary conditions and lawful regularity, but in the same way they also cannot understand the true necessity in Hegel’s sense without freedom. Therefore, not only should freedom be considered as a moment within necessity (as is commonly understood), but necessity must also be considered as a moment within freedom. “So the higher view is: the spirit is free in its necessity, it can only find its freedom in necessity, just as its necessity is only built on its freedom.”<sup>20</sup>

An important source of Hegel’s thought, among other sources, is Spinoza’s point of view. Spinoza already thought that objective substance is “self-caused” and that freedom is cognition of necessity. However, such thoughts were completely negative for Spinoza. They cause the total negation of human freedom, for which reason Hegel criticizes Spinoza. Today, many people’s understanding of Hegel’s concept of freedom aligns with Spinoza’s. Freedom is the cognition of necessity, which seems to mean that everything existing is necessary, and freedom consists in knowing it and obeying it so as not to suffer unnecessary losses and unnecessary troubles. Until nothing else appears in reality, do not go beyond what is present in the fabrication of an “unrealistic” fantasy. Hong Handing points out:

What Spinoza calls free and unfree are in fact both obedience to necessity, but freedom is consciousness of this necessity and consciously obeying it, while being unfree is being unconscious of this necessity, while being obliged to obey this necessity.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, this thought is well expressed in the Roman Stoic motto “fate leads the willing; the unwilling it drags.” However, imposing this view on Hegel is



inappropriate. Hegel goes far beyond this lower-level determinism or fatalism. In his view, true knowledge of necessity is knowing that objective necessity is free and agrees with the free thought of the human being and agrees with human nature along the human way of being. Furthermore, even if many things are currently unreasonable, humanity will necessarily and irreversibly develop in a reasonable direction; the unreasonable will nullify itself by negating itself by itself and cannot resist the power of freedom. Since objective necessity is essentially the actualization of human freedom, people can use the logic of the subject to create their own destiny unconditionally or under all "conditions" in actual life. In other words, objective necessity is the product of free human creation. Speaking to the constant feeling of discomfort in human being which arises from objective necessity restricting them, Hegel explains it with "alienation." He insists that the necessity, which human beings in fact freely create, in turn reshapes human beings in alien form. When people are still unconscious of the fact that these alienated forms are essentially the product of free thinking, they feel unfree. However, through cognition of God's "objective thought," the human being once again sees the manifestation of his free essence in these alien objects. At this time, people reap a double harvest: they not only see that the external objective world possesses the essence of thought and therefore that it agrees with their own thought; they also furthermore come to know themselves and recognize that they are only embodiments of the objective thought of the absolute, of God's thought. The third conclusion to be drawn from this is: the whole process of cognition is that by which God, that is, objective thought, knows itself and attains self-consciousness.

Clearly enough, the conservative nature of Hegel's philosophy is not simply equivalent to the determinism and fatalism of Stoicism and Spinoza, for it contains a positive revolutionary factor. His logic is not the logic of mechanical, external necessity, but rather the logic of free substance. His substance is not a rigid objective being but a practical process of free subjects. This provides a theoretical basis for the exercise of human subjective activity. However, all of this is expressed in the form of a "rational theology" and God's alienation, which pushes the revolutionary essence of his dialectic to the fundamental limit. He sublates alienation within the scope of alienation. The root cause is that he originally understands human beings from the alienated perspective. For Hegel, the human being is only the abstract self-consciousness of the philosopher, and human activity is only the activity of human thought and consciousness. Therefore, human freedom is only the freedom of abstract logic. Human beings "see" the objective world as the product of thought in their own thinking. This does not really overcome the externality and estrangement of the world, but the whole process remains subjective fantasy. When Hegel regards practice as a cognitive process of the logical syllogism, he casts aside the sensuous qualities of practice as the activity of actual human life, and casts aside human beings' feeling of freedom, thereby removing human beings' sensibility and all around richness of human feelings. To Hegel, this

will necessarily lead the relationship of freedom and necessity to dehumanization, desubjectification and ultimate alienation. As Marx points out in *The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*:

Subjective freedom appears in Hegel as formal freedom (it is important, however, that what is free be done freely, that freedom doesn't prevail as an unconscious natural instinct of society), precisely because Hegel has not presented objective freedom as the actualization, the activity, of subjective freedom. Because he has given the presumed or actual content of freedom a mystical bearer, the actual subject of freedom takes on a formal meaning.<sup>22</sup>

After Hegel sublates the person's sensuous freedom (sense of freedom) as abstract, formal freedom, he never returns to this, so he ultimately abandons the ideal purpose for the sake of actual means. Hegel regards substance as free substance, which by itself contains the valuable seeds of practical ontology, but he also regards the subject as merely logical, and only considers the practical as meaningful for "syllogism." This restores the conceptual ontology and makes the active spirit of *nous* dissolve in rationalist *logos*-ism.

### **The actual and the rational**

Since Hegel sees necessity as an aspect of freedom or a moment of it, it is obvious, then, that the objective actual world cannot be unchanging in his opinion, but is rather a process of active development. From this necessary aspect of freedom, he draws out the famous proposition: everything that is real is rational, and everything that is rational is real. The relationship between the actual (*wirklich*) and the rational (*vernünftig*), that is, the relationship between ontology and logic, is reflected in this moment of necessity. Therefore, they can only be understood through the relationship between freedom and necessity. If freedom and necessity are completely opposed, then Hegel's proposition holds that everything real is rational means nothing need be changed. In fact, in Hegel's view, all that presently exists is not completely rational, but will irresistibly develop in the direction of the rational. This process of rational and logical development is the process of the human being's necessary free creation, and it is also true actuality and substance. What is present, insofar as it is existent, of course also contains a certain degree of rationality; but the presently existing is simply acknowledged as a fact, which is still far too insufficient by itself to make it rational, because it still appears superficial, contingent and false in the static present state. It is still not truly "actual":

What it needs is to be comprehended as well, so that the content which is already rational in itself may also gain a rational form and thereby appear justified to free thinking. For such thinking does not stop at what

is given, [...] but starts out from itself and thereby demands to know itself as united in its innermost being with the truth.<sup>23</sup>

What is usually regarded as the separation of the rational and the actual is nothing more than the separation of the rational as subjective freedom and the rational as objective necessity, and this separation can and must be overcome by active subjective cognitive activity, which includes practical activity.

This rational insight is the reconciliation with actuality which philosophy grants to those who have received the inner call to comprehend, to preserve their subjective freedom in the realm of the substantial, and at the same time to stand with their subjective freedom not in a particular and contingent situation, but in what has being in and for itself.<sup>24</sup>

Considered in the abstract, rationality consists in general in the unity and interpenetration of universality and individuality [*Einzelheit*]. Here, in a concrete sense and in terms of its content, it consists in the unity of objective freedom (i.e. of the universal substantial will) and subjective freedom (as the freedom of individual [*individuellen*] knowledge and of the will in its pursuit of particular ends). And in terms of its form, it therefore consists in self-determining action in accordance with laws and principles based on thought and hence universal.<sup>25</sup>

But this ushers in a contradictory attitude toward the actual. If we regard the actual as the rational, and the rational is what must be actualized (become actual), then, when certain changes and events occur in actual life, but they do not necessarily meet the subjective desires of human beings, how should the person who is the subject treat them? Hegel insists that the development of actuality is nothing more than the self-unfolding of the Idea. Therefore,

This development of the Idea as the activity of its own rationality is something which thought, since it is subjective, merely observes, without for its part adding anything extra to it. To consider something rationally means not to bring reason to bear on the object from outside in order to work upon it, for the object is itself rational for itself.<sup>26</sup>

This means that human beings can only stand aside and objectively consider the rationality of the object with the calm vision of a philosopher, instead of “processing it” based on subjective desires. This “rational” calm attitude is a completely passive attitude, but, strangely, Hegel goes on to say that “[i]t is the spirit in its freedom, the highest apex of self-conscious reason, which here gives itself actuality and engenders itself as an existing world.”<sup>27</sup> Hegel explains this seemingly contradictory attitude: under the premise of rationalism, he long ago excluded all subjective desires, moods and emotions from the concept of “freedom.” “Reason does not allow feeling to warm itself in the glow of its own particularity.”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, what he calls freedom mainly

refers to freedom of thought, which is universal and covers all actuality. What he calls practice and the “syllogism of action” only holds epistemic and logical significance. He does not deny that practice arises from personal desires and will, nor does he deny that it carries emotional and passionate components. However, as “free” activity, it must sublimate these subjective aspirations and finite purposes and enter the abstract kingdom of pure reason. People cannot take their personal finite enthusiasm seriously, but must have a humorous or comedic irony, keep their distance from their own limitations and go beyond their own limitations. Otherwise, one will become the victim of universal reason, and his “beautiful soul” will sink into tragic destruction.

This comedic attitude of irony is what Hegel calls a “trick of reason” (also translated as “cunning” or “cleverness”). In Hegel’s view, with this rational cunning, the above-mentioned contradiction in the attitude toward the actual can be rationally resolved. What he calls a trick is itself is a two-sided attitude. Namely, it contains an attitude on the surface and an attitude hidden behind it. This is a concept that belongs to the category of purposiveness. In the “Doctrine of Existence” in Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, he leads the conversion of quality and quantity toward the teleological explanation. In the “Doctrine of Concept,” he elaborates the concept in the relation of purposiveness and in the relation of purpose to means.

The cunning consists generally in the activity of mediating, which, by letting the objects, in keeping with their own nature, act on one another and wear themselves out on one another, without meddling immediately in this process, achieves its purpose alone. In this sense, one can say that the divine providence, over against the world and its process, behaves as the absolute cunning. God gives free rein to human beings with their particular passions and interests and, by this means, what comes about is the accomplishment of his aims which are different from what was pursued by those of whom he makes use in the process.<sup>29</sup>

Human beings already contain the cunning of reason in their everyday activity; they use tools and means to achieve their purposes. This purpose, when it is unactualized, is hidden, for what shows on the outside is only the means and the process. If others behave toward someone in a manner that is restricted to matter-of-fact judgment of external appearances, when they fail to evaluate or they wrongly evaluate her true purpose and cannot embrace an attitude of “hearing someone out” with respect to her outward behavior and speech, then when she achieves her purpose, they will be greatly surprised and will simultaneously discover the total rationality of everything she was saying and doing. Hegel further extends this situation to explain the process of God as absolute reason secretly controlling the actuality of people’s lives. The instruments that people employ are themselves blind and unconscious, and human beings therefore consider themselves “the spirit of all things.” However, before God, the human being is like an instrument, an organ, an

animal; the finite purposes of human beings must be employed by absolute spirit to actualize that absolute purpose, namely the progression of world history. Only when this purpose is actualized (that is, when the history of the world enters a new stage), do people suddenly come to the great realization that human beings are always so fully absorbed in their finite purposes that they cannot pull themselves out in the process.

However, humans are after all different from products and animals. Humans have consciousness and self-consciousness, reason and spirit; the human spirit and the absolute spirit of God are connected. The instrument is still unconscious of its purpose after helping the human being achieve it. After completing the purpose of world history through their own activities or even in the process of doing so, people can become conscious of this purpose, grasp it with their own reason and thereby foresee this purpose at work in future actions. Therefore, they can adapt their actions to this purpose actively and consciously.

Humans do not see themselves as the “means” for the goals of Reason in that entirely external sense at all. On the contrary, not only do they use the occasion to satisfy their particular interests whose content is different from that goal, but they also have a part in that rational goal itself; for that very reason they are to be regarded as ends in themselves. In other words, the human being is an end in himself only by virtue of the divine in him—by virtue of what, from the very outset, was called “Reason,” and called “freedom” too, because Reason is self-activating and self-determining.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, when people consciously conform to the purpose of world history, this is essentially different from instruments being employed without any resistance whatsoever; it shows the freedom of the human being, a self-transcendence over self and a transcendence over what presently exists. Therefore, they are not unconditionally accepting everything that presently exists and doing absolutely nothing about it but looking on as spectators. They actually undertake the active reforming of it while embracing “the will of Heaven.” In the process of so transforming what presently exists, they (similarly in the name of God) indulge their “particular passions,” their own interests and desires, and use them as motivation to handle and obtain those finite objects. They participate in worldly struggles, go beyond the moralizing “conscience” and all self-righteous “sincerity,” expose all hypocrisy, throw themselves into “wicked” deeds and strive without looking back or hesitating like Faust. On the other hand, they (if they are speculative philosophers) are profoundly aware that their actions and finite purposes are only God’s instruments. They keep a distance from themselves while identifying with God and universal reason. Therefore, they do not judge heroes by their success or failure, nor do they reevaluate the significance of their actions in light of whether or not their finite purposes were achieved. So at the same time, they can transcend worldly struggles and attain forgiveness and resolution for all of the evils of

the human world and the harm they have suffered, because the actions of others are only God's instruments for the actualization of his purpose. As soon as finite human beings become conscious of their own finitude, they transcend their own finitude and draw nearer to infinite God. They calmly "contemplate" God's own activity in their own finite activity and the finite activity of all humanity.<sup>31</sup>

This can explain the contradiction between the actual and the rational and their unifying connection in Hegel. Ordinarily people think what is "actual" is the opposite of what is "rational," and demand others "be more realistic," which is actually asking them to set aside all abstract reasoning and all imaginings of how it "ought to be," to accept all relations to the present existing and to immerse themselves in these relations so as to find what they presently need right now. The "rational" conversely seems to demand changing or rectifying the existing order (or disorder); in light of the rational, one looks to the future, though this future is forever unactualized. It is just an "ideal." The former attitude is a helpless attitude. It gives up human freedom for the sake of blind obedience to external necessity. The latter attitude is an "unrealistic" attitude, which divorces from actual necessities and strives for abstract personal freedom, but is inevitably shot down by the actual. Hegel goes beyond this dichotomy. In his view, the actual is not what is currently existing, but is instead essentially that which is rational, including ideals and "what ought to be"—or rather, the actual is the process of the presently existing negating itself by itself to conform to what is logical. Similarly, the rational is not merely an "ought," an ideal that is beyond one's striving, but instead has the means of actualizing itself and is already in the process of actualizing itself. Thus, people's attitude toward the presently existing also reaches the following attitude of contradictory unity: on the one hand, people pierce through the appearance or simulacrum of the presently existing and see through it into the rational substance of actuality within it; they see that it will inevitably be changed and sublated due to negating itself by itself, and no one can resist such necessity. Toward it, the singular human being can only stand by as spectators with folded arms. At best, the singular human being can delay or accelerate its progress; on the other hand, people become conscious that such necessity is only actualizable when everyone freely participates in relation to all that is and actively transforms it. The reason why people can "stand by and watch" the substance of the world's progression is because they themselves participate and invest themselves in the progression of the actual world, engage in corresponding activity and concretely experience the inner truth of life. The spirit of the world expresses itself as the spirit of every singular human being or it is nothing at all. If you wish to intuit or contemplate the spirit of the world, you must yourself get experience of (*erleben*) it, freely act and experience it through your own actions. You must boldly pursue the finite purpose presently before you without any hesitation, and consider this finite purpose as the limitation and particularization of the infinite absolute purpose. You cannot stay safe in the abstract void of moral preaching; one

cannot just cynically keep one's nose clean and do nothing at all ("beautiful soul"). "The cunning of reason" is not escaping from the actual or craftily slipping by the actual without taking responsibility for it, but is instead the power of the actual: "Reason is as cunning as it is powerful."<sup>32</sup> So for Hegel, the meanings of "the actual" and "the ideal" are reversed when it comes to attitude: the truly realistic attitude toward the actual is the attitude of free action; the ideal, "the ought to be" or "the rational" attitude is the contemplation and recognition of the logical necessity in actual life. Thanks to this reversal in understanding, the opposition between the actual and the rational is cancelled.

Substantively speaking, Hegel's viewpoint here is already a breakthrough of that imposing concept and rationalist framework of his. Of course, his logical Idea is still the intrinsic tendency and destiny of the world's progression, but this logical necessity only finds its actualization through those finite, contingent purposes of human beings, through their passion and enthusiasm in history:

Our first look at history convinces us that the actions of human beings stem from their needs, their passions, their interests, their characters and talents. And it appears that the only springs of action in this theater of activity, and the mainsprings, are these needs, passions, and interests [...] It is the passions, the aims of particular interests, the satisfaction of selfish desire that are the most forceful things.<sup>33</sup>

We must assert as a general proposition that nothing great has been accomplished in the world without passion.<sup>34</sup>

But Hegel insists that such behavior as abstract and subjective yet free actions are only the means used by that true historical journey of objective freedom; it is only that the means and the purpose here are intrinsically identical: the means is the potential end, and the end the actualized means. The means and the end are one, and are both freedom. So, even though the singular actions and individual actions and personalities of human beings are bound by necessity and not truly concrete freedom, Hegel insists that "we ascribe to freedom whatever appears in the conscious will of human beings as their interest."<sup>35</sup> It is in this abstract, arbitrary free activity that concrete, true freedom is formed. Mere arbitrariness alone is not enough, but the suppression and elimination of all arbitrariness is out of the question for even the most basic freedom. True freedom is the process of continuously striving for freedom on arbitrary grounds (abstract freedom):

But at the same time it is freedom in itself that contains the infinite necessity of bringing itself to consciousness (for in its very concept it is knowledge of itself) and thereby to reality. Freedom is for itself the goal to be achieved, and the only goal of Spirit.<sup>36</sup>



Abstract freedom, arbitrariness and selfish desire will lead to evil, but it also potentially contains good and true freedom. Evil is the driving force or lever of world history.<sup>37</sup> There is a saying that Hegel “sees people’s activities as unconscious.”<sup>38</sup> This is inaccurate. Hegel rather believes that people consciously pursue their purposes. This consciousness and self-consciousness potentially contain the free purposive source of history, which makes it possible for people to actualize their true purposes and the purpose of world history. Divine purpose is enveloped in the finite purposes of human beings. This self-consciousness of true freedom is of course attained by the speculative philosopher; however, the philosopher does not obtain historical self-consciousness from anywhere else but the many finite acts of human consciousness and spirit in history.

Hegel’s thought here is arguably most incisive and profound so long as the theological interpretation regarding God and absolute spirit are eliminated and replaced by actual human history and social development. Marx’s historical materialism focuses on sensuous human life and the actual socioeconomic interpersonal relations, on the political economy and its fundamental significance in the philosophy of humanity. Marx establishes true consistency between the laws of logic and the substance of history, but this consistency is not equivalence without contradiction. There will forever be a contradictory relation precluding absolute identity between human practice or human freedom as the substance of history and the objectively necessary laws of logic. This is why Marx never regards the laws of historical development that he finds as abstract external dogmas, but instead always emphasizes the spirit of freedom and activity of human beings (the proletariat) in practical actions. According to Marx, although all progress in the sphere of history is premised on the free will of human beings, people are not conscious of it. Other wills become objective beings alien to one’s own will; the activity of other wills and the products of it posit constraints upon my will, and strangest of all is that such self-estranging beings and constraints are also caused by my own will and free activity. Materials have lost their sensuous peculiarities and are neither interpersonal media nor confirmations of personal freedom, but a gulf separating one person from another, an estrangement of human beings from their own essence. Therefore, up to now, although history is based on the necessity of freedom, this necessity must be reflected in the external forces that constrain everyone’s freedom. Human freedom must obey this necessity unconditionally. Human beings who are essentially free still need to go through the process of rising from the realm of necessity up to the realm of true freedom. As Marx points out in *The German Ideology*:

The relation of the productive forces to the form of intercourse is the relation of the form of intercourse to the occupation or activity of the individuals [...] so long as the above-mentioned contradiction is absent, are conditions appertaining to their individuality, in no way external to them;



conditions under which these definite individuals, living under definite relationships, can alone produce their material life and what is connected with it, are thus the conditions of their self-activity and are produced by this self-activity.<sup>39</sup>

These various conditions, which appear first as conditions of self-activity, later as fetters upon it.<sup>40</sup>

Individuals have always built on themselves, but naturally on themselves within their given historical conditions and relationships, not on the “pure” individual in the sense of the ideologists. But in the course of historical evolution, and precisely through the inevitable fact that within the division of labour social relationships take on an independent existence, there appears a division within the life of each individual insofar as it is personal and insofar as it is determined by some branch of labour and the conditions pertaining to it.<sup>41</sup>

The transformation, through the division of labour, of personal powers (relationships) into material powers, cannot be dispelled by dismissing the general idea of it from one’s mind, but can only be abolished by the individuals again subjecting these material powers to themselves and abolishing the division of labour.<sup>42</sup>

These citations of Marx all clearly demonstrate the Hegelian source of Marx’s thought, which is first and foremost the critique of Hegel’s idealism.

### **The historical and the logical**

The consistent relationship of agreement between the rational and the actual already includes the consistent relationship of agreement between the logical and the historical. This relationship can only be historical because the actual is not everything presently “existing,” but is instead found in the process of logical self-negation. The historical here is not the accumulation, addition and stacking up of a series of existing things in time, but intrinsically necessary lawful development. In other words, as concrete temporality, history is not a warehouse of accidental events, but an irreversible logical process that can only be so and is necessarily so. Hegel’s “linear” idea of history has been criticized and ridiculed for a long time running now. The modern megatrend of “multiple” ideas of history and the replacement of “idea of history” with “idea of culture” also seem to indeed prove Hegel’s narrowness. Today, people pay more attention to the contingency in history and the particular laws of the cultural development of various nationalities, and throw aside the Hegelian philosophy of history, “historical reason” and “historical determinism.” However, I think that although modern Western historians treat Hegel’s philosophy of history as a “dead dog,” they have received the baptism of Hegel’s idea of history. This is because Hegel is a particularly inescapable figure in history. As Engels puts it: “Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation

between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the insight into necessity (*die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit*).<sup>43</sup> This credit of being a “pioneer” has made Hegel a giant in historical science. Hegel had a comprehensive and rich knowledge of natural sciences that was unparalleled at the time, but his interest was mainly in the field of human history. For the first time, he made history historic.

In Hegel’s view, only human history truly reflects the freedom and ultimate purpose of “absolute spirit,” but his research on and attention to history is not only for the sake of pointing out that the development of world history is the development of the spirit of freedom, but also for the sake of revealing the necessary laws of this process of freedom or the necessary aspect of freedom, so as to (logically) grasp it and actualize it. As he puts it: “World history is the progress in the consciousness of freedom—a progress that we must come to know in its necessity.”<sup>44</sup> Hegel insists that freedom as contingent and arbitrary impulse cannot be grasped but must instead be obeyed. True freedom is knowable in its necessity, and consequently become actual through one’s active doing, through the “syllogism of action.” It is not an erotic impulse but a rational, conceptual or logical impulse to grasp history in one’s own hands. This logical impulse of reason is the creation of all history in God and the only basis for understanding the process of historical development for finite human beings as well as the source of all human beliefs (representing God) in autonomous historical activity. The logical impulse contains two aspects, namely, the aspect of freedom and the aspect of necessity; here, freedom is embodied in necessity and the essence of necessity is freedom. The irreversibility of history and the necessity of logic are ultimately nothing but the manner in which freedom and spirit develop. A free spirit will never let history revert back to where it originally was, because it already went beyond the original stage long ago and sublates the stage that it is by its very nature because its nature is nothing more than the negation of itself. Of course, this self-negation of history will negate itself further and reach the negation of negation, but this is not for the sake of reverting back to the original place, but to restart at a higher level. This rising movement from lower to higher is the irreversibility and necessary regularity of the development of spiritual freedom, which is the logic of free spirit.

Hegel insists that as the logic of the development of free spirit, the course of history is manifested as an internal connection or “deep inward reflection” (*Erinnerung*, recollection). It is not a change from one thing to another, nor is it “modification of meaning” as Fulda calls it, but is rather the same concept itself becoming increasingly clear and profound:

The further development of the idea is one and the same thing as its greater determination. Here what is most extensive is also what is most intensive.<sup>45</sup>

So the idea is at once the central point and periphery, the light source that in all its diffusion does not come outside itself but instead remains

present and immanent within itself. So the idea is the system of necessity and is its own necessity, which accordingly is likewise its freedom.<sup>46</sup>

History is a cohesive, intrinsic, purposive, living process, and its logic is the logic of the development of life; it is not the formal logic of external mechanism. External contingent facts and their causality are only the means by which the inner logic of history manifests itself. From this perspective, "history" is nothing more than a logical system embodied in time. Hegel starts from history, but his final destination is *Logic*. His historicism is not only based on logicism, but completely fuses into logicism. In this regard, it is understandable that people hate Hegel's "historical reason." In criticizing Hegel's philosophy of right, Marx states,

The concrete content, the actual definition, appears as something formal; the wholly abstract formal definition appears as the concrete content. The essence of the definitions of the state is not that they are definitions of the state, but that in their most abstract form they can be regarded as logical-metaphysical definitions.<sup>47</sup>

We pointed out earlier that Marx's critique of all of Hegel's philosophy is arguably directed against this abstraction, which he calls "the secret of speculative philosophy."

However, despite this, Hegel's logicism focuses on historical actuality. As Engels points out,

What makes Hegel's way of thinking different from all other philosophers is that his way of thinking is based on a huge sense of history. Although form is so abstract and idealistic, his ideological development is always closely parallel to the development of world history.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, the medium between Hegelian logicism and historicism is a "feeling of history," or the experience of the historical era and the atmosphere of a people's spirit.<sup>49</sup> This experience penetrates into the active subject created by history through the infinite connection of occasional events and external conditions, and touches on the intrinsic necessity of its freedom. It is through the immediate experience of this intrinsic necessity that Hegel is able to posit his logical system of history. Hegel often shows awareness of this, as he states at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

The aim, absolute knowing, or spirit knowing itself as spirit, has its path in the recollection of spirits as they are in themselves and are as they achieve the organization of their realm. Their preservation according to their free-standing existence appearing in the form of contingency is history, but according to their conceptually grasped organization, it is the science of phenomenal knowing. Both together are conceptually grasped

history; they form the recollection and the Golgotha of absolute spirit, the actuality, the truth, the certainty of its throne, without which it would be lifeless and alone.<sup>50</sup>

History, specifically “history that is understood conceptually,” is the throne of absolute spirit. Only when Hegel’s *Logic* is considered in connection with the irreversibility and lawfulness of history can it show the power of necessity and the certainty of the actual in the same way that his view of history can only but reveal the intrinsic lawfulness of itself through his unique, conceptual, logical thinking because the necessity of logic and the irreversibility of history (as free subject) are originally one and the same to him, namely, objective thinking or the active self-creation of absolute spirit.

Because Hegel has abstracted the most fundamental from the creation of history, namely the sensuous life activity of real human beings, and because he does not start from sensuous activity but from the abstract act of philosophical thinking, he in turn regards sensuous activity and practical action as nothing more than external moments of the act of philosophical thought. So even though his “immense sense of history” makes him dialectically unite history and logic into a totality, he simultaneously slips into idealism in both logic and history. Moreover, his ontology, which is the unity of history and logic, becomes (in Heidegger’s words) a “rootless ontology.” Hegel fails to theoretically clarify his “sense of history,” nor does he refer to sensuous activity and sensuous experiences with important philosophical significations. This philosopher emphasizes “self-consciousness” the most among all philosophers; on this point, he simply does not attain self-consciousness and is not conscious of the inconsistency between what he does and what he thinks he is doing. Therefore, Hegel only “guessed” the correlation between his *Logic* and historical development. He does not establish this connection from the “bottom-up” but set it up “top-down.” That is, he does not discover the identity between the historical process of this activity and its logical necessity from the practical activities of human actuality, but from the abstract logical thinking of the human being (through some kind of “ontological proof”) to extrapolate the objective spirit and the existence of God as “the logical” (*das Logische*). Thus, in the name of this objective, logical “self,” he goes on to deduce the whole of history.<sup>51</sup> This reversal earned him unprecedented success in elucidating the logical nature of history, but it also earned him the meanest ridicule for deducing the historical form of logic.

However, even in the latter aspect, if only from a methodological perspective rather than from an ontological perspective (Hegel equates the two), it still contains very valuable things. Speaking of methods in the history of philosophy, Hegel writes:

The historical succession of the systems of philosophy is the same as the succession in the logical derivation of the idea’s conceptual determinations. My contention is that, by stripping away from the basic concepts

of the systems appearing in the history of philosophy whatever pertains to their external configuration, to their application to particular concerns, and the like, we are left with the different stages of determination of the idea itself in its logical concepts. Vice versa, by taking the logical progression on its own terms we have, in accord with its main moments, the progression of the idea's historical appearances.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, Engels, speaking of the method of political economy, writes: "The logical way of studying is the only way that works. However, in fact, this method is nothing more than a historical research method, but it is free from the form of history and the contingency of disruption."<sup>53</sup>

People often blame Hegel for arbitrarily tailoring historical facts to fit his logical form, and these accusations are right in a sense. The reason is not because, in general, logical thinking should not be used to screen existing historical data, but because Hegel's *Logic* itself contains a priori elements deviating from the facts. Fundamentally speaking, his *Logic* is opposed to perceptual objective history,<sup>54</sup> but he suggests that people should not treat historical data passively and without choice, and that we should instead use our own initiative to deal with and grasp the activity of history, get better at discovering and picking out necessary and essential events from the vast number of accidents, and express their essential meaning logically and consistently. This is not his fault, but his huge theoretical contribution. This is where he is more advanced than all philosophy of history and historical science of his time, and even more advanced than today's historical (cultural) pluralists.

In his book *Main Trends in Contemporary Historiography*, Geoffrey Barraclough states:

Under the influence of current world events, the ideal that historians want to achieve is to establish a new outlook on history. This view of history holds that all nations and civilizations in every region of the world are on an equal position and have the right to ask for equal consideration and investigation of themselves, it is not allowed to exclude the experience of any nation or civilization as marginal meaningless things.<sup>55</sup>

Although this ideal is still just as unactualized as the equality of people, this effort still has its theoretical value (the political value of it perhaps even exceeds its theoretical value today). However, I think that unless an independent study of the particular culture of each region or nation can conclusively derive a "logic," which (through comparative research) can transcend the regional or national scope and have universal significance for other cultures and nations, such research will merely stop at the empirical level of positivist description. The insistence on the "particularity" of a nation's cultural history alone cannot compete with Hegel's philosophy of history. Anyone who wishes to break through the imposing framework of such philosophy of history may only succeed by creatively presenting a non-imposing framework for the

history of philosophy that agrees with their own people's culture. Otherwise, the sheer attempt will only take the theory down in failing to attain the philosophical level of history.

Hegel's thought, which brings history into agreement with logic, most profoundly and typically presents the combination and inner union of the spirit of *nous* and the spirit of *logos* in the Western tradition. Penetrating deep into Hegel's "historical reason" and analyzing it is not a particular issue this book takes up. But there is no doubt that Hegel's dialectic cannot be understood without historical dialectic. When Marx directly calls his doctrine "historical materialism," he obviously carries on the precious theoretical legacy of Hegel's consistent connection of history and logic. But compared to Hegel, Marx insists much rather on the sensuous person who engages in actual sensuous activity in history, on the sensuous social relations of these persons, not on the "history" that abstractly rides roughshod over every person. He points out:

Once man is recognised as the essence and base of all human activity and situations [...] History does nothing, it possesses no immense wealth, it wages no battles! It is man, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; "history" is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve its own aims; history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims.<sup>56</sup>

The goal of Marx's lifelong struggle is "the liberation of man," not the self-consciousness of "absolute spirit" in himself. On the other hand, Marx also states:

As philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its spiritual weapons in philosophy. And once the lightning of thought has squarely struck this ingenuous soil of the people the emancipation of the Germans into human beings will take place.<sup>57</sup>

"Once the theory masters the masses, it will also become a material force," because it can "grasp the root of things" and "the person itself."<sup>58</sup> On the premise of materialism, this expresses the idea that Hegel proposes, namely to make logic (theory) actively realize itself as history through the "syllogism of action." Marxism's active historical dialectic is the first scientific/philosophical system in the history of Western thought to unite the traditional spirits of *nous* and *logos* in actual human life and its history.

Hegel's dialectic as "unity of four" or "unity of three" is one of the most prominent and distinctive features of Hegel's philosophy, and it is also the key to understanding Hegel's philosophy in general. Since Aristotle, the Western philosophical tradition has been undergoing a process of separating and opposing epistemology, ontology and logic to greater and greater degrees. Logic is regarded as a "neutral" tool between subjective cognition

and objective substance; cognition can only be mediated, whereas substance is always something outside of cognition. This tendency developed to an extreme degree in Kant's philosophy. Hegel was the first to restore the ancient "unity of three." With the help of the dialectic, he brought cognition into the immediate truth and entered the "inside" of substance, but at the same time, he made cognition rational and logical. This is a great credit to him. Modern philosophy is increasingly inclined to radically eliminate external oppositions between thinking and being, subjective and objective, while insisting ever more on the immediate forms of cognition and on discovering the deficiencies of scientific reason or instrumental rationality, which is all connected to Hegel's pioneering thought of the "unity of the three."<sup>59</sup> However, not everyone will admit that to truly overcome the opposition between thinking and being, we must think along the lines of this dialectic idea articulated by Hegel (and Marx and Engels). We cannot discuss in detail all of the different modern theories of "immediate truth" here, but at the very least we could say the unity of the three would remain impossible to imagine were it not for the dialectic of Hegelian thought. The Hegelian dialectic's "unity of the three" is also inseparable from the previous two major distinctive features of Hegelian thought, namely self-negation and reflection. I believe based on the account that I have put forward in this book that the entirety of the tension of the speculative system of Hegel's dialectic has been presented in a relatively complete way, although it is still rough.

## Notes

- 1 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, vol. 2, p. 593.
- 2 According to W.R. Boyer, when Hegel's tripartite demand insists on the content of the phenomenon that it is processing, practice always emerges as a source of knowledge, or at the very least, one of the three moments is by nature practical or is enriched by practice. (Philosophy Department of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 1986, 18–19). Although this viewpoint overly extends the particular sense of "practice" in Hegel, it generally holds true.
- 3 Lenin 1976, 190.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 216.
- 5 Philosophy Department of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 1986, 30.
- 6 Horstmann 1978, 39–40.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 41.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 44.
- 9 "On *Logic* and the Relationship between Dialectic and Logic," in (Horstmann 1978, 81).
- 10 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 89.
- 12 Hegel 2010, 33.
- 13 Hegel 1970, 9.
- 14 Engels 1959, 157.
- 15 Hegel 2010, 639–40.

- 16 Ibid., 640.
- 17 Ibid., 643.
- 18 Hegel 1991, 219.
- 19 Ibid., 220–1.
- 20 Hegel 1995, 173.
- 21 Spinoza 1984, 367.
- 22 Marx 1970, ch. 4.
- 23 Hegel 1991a, 11.
- 24 Ibid., 22.
- 25 Ibid., 276.
- 26 Ibid., 60.
- 27 Ibid., 32.
- 28 Ibid., 17.
- 29 Hegel 1991, 281.
- 30 Hegel 1988, 23.
- 31 Hegel 2018, 167–8.
- 32 Hegel 1991, 281.
- 33 Hegel 1988, 23.
- 34 Ibid., 26.
- 35 Ibid., 28.
- 36 Ibid., 22.
- 37 Marx also holds that abominable human passions like greed have become the levers of historical development at least since the beginning of class conflict (*Collected Works* vol. 4, p. 233). Allegedly, Marx also praised and repeatedly quoted Hegel's saying: "Even if the criminal thought of a villain is greater and nobler than the miracle in heaven" (Lafargue 1957, 73).
- 38 Ovsyannikov 1959, 293.
- 39 Marx & Engels 1968, pt. 1, ch. 4., sec. 2.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Engels 1947, para. 25.
- 44 Hegel 1988, 22.
- 45 Hegel 1995, 174–5.
- 46 Ibid., 175.
- 47 Marx 1970, 263.
- 48 Marx 1971, 41.
- 49 For reference, see my article (Deng 1990).
- 50 Hegel 2018, 467.
- 51 Contrast this with the method of Descartes, who deduces God's existence from "I think, therefore I am," then by way of this God guarantees the veracity of all of my knowledge and deduces the veracity of the whole objective world. Hegel in this respect is essentially in agreement with Descartes.
- 52 Hegel 1995, 176.
- 53 Marx 1971, 42.
- 54 But at this point, Oizelman's evaluation of Hegel is exaggerated. He believes that "the opposition between logic (pan-theory) and history runs through Hegel's entire philosophy of history [...] according to Hegel's theory, the historical philosophical



process has two fundamentally different dimensions” (*Dialectical Materialism and Hegel's Theory of Historical Philosophy*, in *Philosophical Translation Series*, 1981, No. 2, p. 5). He also thinks that “[t]he essence of the problem is precisely that as a reflection of history. Logical movement with cognition, by its very nature, is impossible to agree with objective historical development. Hegel confuses history with logic and attributes the former to the latter” (Ibid., p. 7). People do not understand the point at which Hegel dissatisfied Oizelman. Is it because logic and history are “opposed,” or are they “mixed up?” Or both?

55 Barraclough 1987, 158.

56 Marx & Engels 1956b, para. 6.

57 Marx 1906, para. 55.

58 Ibid.

59 Ye 1988, 114–16.

# Conclusion

The purpose of this book is to explore the “system of tension” in Hegel’s dialectic, or to try to make a systematic summarization of the internal structural relations of Hegel’s dialectic, and by penetrating deep into its innermost point of growth and into the contradictory relations that come into being from it, to reveal the mysteries of the dialectical movement of life. Based on the analysis of Hegel’s main works on the dialectic, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and especially the *Science of Logic*, this book believes that the following main conclusions can be drawn:

1. Research on Hegel’s dialectic must first retrace the entire historical background of Western culture and the source of Western thought, or the factors of thought implicit in ancient Greek philosophy. The underlying structure of this factor as the spirit of the culture does not vanish with the replacement of the historical era, but different variations of that spirit have determined the mode of thought and direction of theory for each era. This is the Western tradition’s spirit of *nous* and spirit of *logos*. The opposition, division and unification of the two unfolded as a series of thought-forms in the history of Western philosophy, and for the first time, here in Hegel, it reached complete integration. The system of tension in Hegel’s dialectic is constituted by the opposition and unity of these two factors, *nous* and *logos*.
2. The *nous* impulse, represented by negative dialectic, has the most fundamental status and role in Hegel’s philosophy; it constitutes the active soul of Hegel’s dialectic. All other dialectical laws are derived from this core law. The principle of self-negation most immediately expresses dialectical freedom and the subjectivity of self-consciousness while also presenting the origin and motivation of the “self-movement” of all that is. Self-negation takes a mysterious, abstract and idealistic form in Hegel, but the revolutionary factor and core of dialectical reason that it contains and runs on still deserve to be vigorously explored.
3. The negative dialectic possesses its own unique form of expression, which is the reflective way of thinking represented by the spirit of *logos*. Reflection makes the progression of Hegel’s dialectical subject obtain its

own positive form of certainty and become a lawful, rational and logical process. It posits for freedom its own internal necessity, establishes positive steps forward for the unlimited impulse of negation and turns negative reason into positive “speculative reason.” The tension of speculation consists of self-negation and reflection; however, they are not two but one and the same “reason,” the content and form of one and the same active process.

4. Hegel’s dialectic, as a system of tensions, possesses the structure of organic life inside of itself, which makes it have a dynamic relationship in each field of philosophy that goes beyond one field and merges with another. The dialectical method, as logic, is paralinguistic and therefore epistemological. As epistemology, it is trans-theoretical and therefore ontological; as ontology, it is beyond the presently existing and therefore logical. Hegel’s dialectic as the first union of logic, epistemology and ontology becomes the very first universal law that runs through all of nature, history and human spirit, which is unprecedented in the history of philosophy. How to evaluate this point fully and correctly is a question for further discussion.
5. Marxist philosophy is posited through the critical sublation of Hegelian philosophy. But how exactly do Marx, Engels and Lenin critically sublate Hegelian philosophy? It is impossible to come up with a precise answer just from reading the discourses of Marx, Engels and Lenin without simultaneously gaining greater familiarity with, and penetrating deeper into, Hegel’s ideas. Without the latter, the best one will get is an abstract, formal understanding of how this occurs. Gaining a deeply penetrating grasp of Hegel’s philosophy, conversely, will push us in our study of Marxist philosophy beyond the superficial linguistic aspect of the thought’s expression, and allow us to enter its inner soul.

# Postscript

Starting in the spring of 1971, under a dim kerosene lamp, I began gnawing on G.W.F. Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*, translated by Mr. He Lin. Twenty years passed since then. It may be difficult for people to imagine that the thoughts of this Western philosopher from more than a hundred years ago gave a student in a remote country who was studying at night by lamplight enlightenment and comfort. Early on, I was determined to eat this hard walnut in preparation for reading Karl Marx's *Capital*. I believe Vladimir Lenin when he said, "If you don't study and understand all of Hegel's *Logic*, you can't fully understand Marx's *Capital*, especially its first chapter." After roaming in the realm of Hegel's "absolute spirit," although I did not find a God playing with "rational cunning" as the old Hegel expected, I truly experienced the tremendous power that permeates everyone's heart from the thoughtful activities of the universal human spirit, the power of reason. Facing a bizarre and irrational reality at that time, this force encouraged me to explore a rational world and to firmly believe that this rational world transcends finitude.

In 1979, I was admitted to the Department of Philosophy of Wuhan University for a master's degree in the history of Western philosophy. Here, I learned a lot of things and felt my own shallowness. The "Methodology of the History of Philosophy" jointly offered by the teaching and research sections on the history of Chinese and foreign philosophy has benefited me a lot and has aroused my great interest in studying Marxist methodology. After graduating and staying in school, I myself participated in the teaching of this course. Since then, the issue of dialectics and methodology has always been a focus of my attention. During my studies and later daily contacts and exchanges, I was able to often discuss issues with my mentors, Chen Xiuzhai, Mr. Yang Zutao and Mr. Xiao Shafu, and had the opportunity to listen to the perspectives of these predecessors. It was at the urging of my mentors that I gradually entered the palace of dialectical philosophy.

In the summer of 1988, when I accepted the task of doing the National Social Science Fund project "Hegel's New Theory of Philosophy," I was not very at ease in my heart, and only had a general idea. I wanted to take this opportunity to clear up some of the problems that I had been thinking

about for a long time. But due to insufficient preparation, I was unable to get started. It wasn't until my last summer vacation that this work could no longer be postponed, and I decided to write it down first, regardless of my shallowness. During the writing period, I exchanged views with Mr. Yang Zutao, who was in charge of this topic, almost every week, discussed my writing progress, deepened my views and obtained many extremely valuable opinions and inspirations. After the first draft of the book was completed, Mr. Yang worked tirelessly and carefully read the manuscript three times from beginning to end. In addition to putting forward a large number of overall revisions, he also discussed the chapters, paragraphs, terminology and some points of view; repeated discussions with the author; and carefully compared it with the original German version of the translation of many quotations. It can be said that this book can only be as it is now due to the joint efforts of Mr. Yang and myself. When the book was finalized, the profound knowledge and demeanor of the older generation of scholars, the sense of sincerity toward the latecomers and the sincerity and hopes for academic careers were all vividly in sight. The author's mood at this time can only be described with the word "thank you."

Mr. Long Yuqun of Hunan Education Press has made great efforts to publish this book. I deeply admire his knowledge, courage and foresight, and I would like to express my gratitude to him.

What makes me feel sorry is that, in addition to the lack of time and the fact that many viewpoints have not been developed and deepened, my academic training and skills also limit the free rein of this book in this difficult field, meaning that there are inevitably difficulties, even mistakes, and improper points. I hope you will not hesitate to correct me in these respects.

Deng Xiaomang  
July 28, 1991, at Mt. Luojia

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